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Embrace the good, refuse the bad: Haitian American children's selective engagement with the United States

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EMBRACE THE GOOD, REFUSE THE BAD: HAITIAN AMERICAN CHILDREN'S SELECTIVE ENGAGEMENT WITH THE UNITED STATES

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DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this work to the children, parents, and staff members of Fanmi Nou. As feminist anthropologist Emily Martin said, “The gifts of insight that people give us into their lives can never be repaid.”

I would also like to dedicate this work to the memory of Michal Michiels (1997–2020) and to the memory of Zahara Kathawalla (1997–2020).

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EMBRACE THE GOOD, REFUSE THE BAD: HAITIAN AMERICAN CHILDREN'S SELECTIVE ENGAGEMENT WITH THE UNITED STATES

CARLY RITGER

ABSTRACT

This qualitative research study investigates the perceptions of children, parents, and staff members at a Boston multi-service nonprofit for Haitian immigrants. It is an exploration of how children cultivate their identity, and how a center for immigrants functions in the current sociopolitical climate. There is an evidentiary lacuna of qualitative explorations on children of immigrants' perceptions and health. The COVID-19 pandemic makes this issue even more temporally relevant, as new data suggests structural factors make marginalized groups, such as people of color and immigrants, more vulnerable to infection and death. This study will contribute to the body of work on children of immigrants' health by 1) analyzing the unique child perspective, as opposed to focusing entirely on adults or using quantitative child measures, 2) employing qualitative data to create more robust depictions of lived experiences, 3) and situating data in the particular Haiti/U.S. historical, political relationship. This study's methodology includes ethnographic participant observation during regular visits to a nonprofit organization for immigrants (Fanmi Nou) over the course of several months, semi-structured video interviews with children, parents, and staff members of this organization, and content analysis of documents produced by Fanmi Nou.

Through different waves of migration to the United States, children of Haitian immigrants have lived bicultural lives. In the last four years, however, biculturalism and

transnationality have come under growing assault. As a reactionary response to overt hostility, parents, staff members at Fanmi Nou, and children themselves, actively promote a Haitian identity in children. Living under an administration characterized by its hostility to immigrants, Haitian American children pick and choose which aspects of American life to welcome and which to reject. Through a multi-service nonprofit organization, these children and their families selectively engage with the U.S. political, educational, and social systems. I argue that these children and this organization strategically support the healthy development of self under these new restrictions.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AEDPA ..... Antiterrorism and Effective Death Penalty Act

ASB ..... Arizona Senate Bill

BMI ..... Body Mass Index

BPS ..... Boston Public Schools

BU ..... Boston University

BUSM ..... Boston University School of Medicine

CBPR ..... Community Based Participatory Research

CMA ..... Critical Medical Anthropology

COVID-19 ..... Coronavirus Disease 2019

DSM ..... Diagnostic and Statistical Manual

FDA ..... Food and Drug Administration

ICE ..... Immigration and Customs Enforcement

IIRIRA ..... Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act

IRB ..... Institutional Review Board

MBTA ..... Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority

NGO ..... Non-Governmental Organization

PET ..... Positron Emission Tomography

PTSD ..... Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder

TPS ..... Temporary Protected Status

CHAPTER ONE: Introduction

"Why are we having all these people from shithole countries come here?"..."Why do we need more Haitians?"..."Take them out," (Donald Trump's commentary on Haiti; cited in Dawsey [2018]).

In 2018, the *Washington Post* reported on former President Trump's comments during a discussion with lawmakers about a bipartisan immigration deal to protect immigrants from Haiti, El Salvador, and African nations. These three phrases sum up the Trump administration's outward perceptions of and policies towards Haiti and Haitians throughout his term in office. This bias, however, was not a pattern new to 2018. Rather, the Trump administration and its constituents brought to the fore an embedded hostility that already existed.

The singling out of Haitians for insult by U.S. leaders has a major place in the history of U.S. and Haiti relations. Because of this unique relationship, I became interested in how an organization for Haitian immigrants operates in the U.S. today. How does this organization, run by Haitian immigrants, function in a climate where the President of the United States could make such relentlessly hostile comments? Statements coming from the highest position, restrictive policies, and ground level resource access reflected this hostility.

The time during which the Trump administration gloried in its hostility towards immigrants overlapped with this research study. The organization with which I collaborated, Fanmi Nou, allowed me to dive into these explorations of how they operated during a time of renewed discrimination. "Fanmi Nou," Haitian Creole (Kreyòl)

for “Our Family,” is a fitting pseudonym for their organization. Throughout my time there, I heard Fanmi Nou’s members describe one another as “family” frequently. Apart from verbal statements about how close staff members and families that used its services were to one another, I could *feel* this sense of family when I visited their space.

The focus of this qualitative ethnographic research study was to investigate the perceptions of children, parents, and staff members at a Boston multi-service center for Haitian immigrants. Though originally designed to explore children’s perceptions of their caregivers’ immigration-related experiences, this study became a broader exploration of how children cultivate their identity, and how a center for immigrants functioned in the sociopolitical climate.

Through different waves of migration to the United States, children of Haitian immigrants have lived bicultural lives. In the last four years, however, biculturalism and transnationality have come under growing assault. Living under an administration characterized by its hostility to immigrants, Haitian American children pick and choose which aspects of American life to welcome and which to reject. Through a multi-service nonprofit organization, these children and their families selectively engage with the U.S. political, educational, and social systems. I argue that these children and this organization strategically support the healthy development of self under these new restrictions.

Gaps in the Literature and Contemporary Significance

My interest in this topic emerged from experiences working with children. As an undergraduate, I studied child development and psychology. I became interested in how

research portrayed the child research participant, and noticed that many (if not most) of the studies I came across did not actually attempt to *ask* children their opinions and viewpoints, but superimposed conclusions and recommendations on them based on interpretations of quantitative data. Measures such as IQ, body mass index, and language proficiency have been used to assess health outcomes and as markers for adaptation to an unfamiliar environment (Strickman-Stein et al. 2010; Harker 2001). Literature exploring children's own perceptions of immigration (their own or their family members') is rare (National Research Council [US] and Institute of Medicine [US] Committee on the Health and Adjustment of Immigrant Children and Families 1998). This research gap suggests a tendency to devalue or deemphasize the perspectives of children, particularly children from marginalized communities. The research that exists on marginalized children and their communities often paints these groups as vulnerable to a variety of negative health outcomes. At the risk of taking advantage of this "vulnerable" population, children—especially Black immigrant children—are often either involved in research solely through these types of quantitative methods, or excluded from research entirely.

The significance of my research, first, lies in its focus on the perspectives of children and adults who work with them, as opposed to focusing entirely on adults or using quantitative child measures. Second, I contribute by employing qualitative data, which creates more robust depictions of lived experiences. Third, I investigate bicultural identity formation of children in the U.S. context, which is significant because of the particular relationship between the U.S. and Haiti.

Why Does this Matter for Health?

The perceptions of children and the adult figures in their immediate environments relate to their health and wellbeing; a topic that carries a unique salience in today's political climate. The number of immigrants that help make up the United States population has increased in recent decades (Budiman 2020). At the same time, the Trump administration backed harmful immigration policy and spewed anti-immigrant rhetoric, creating a more hostile political climate for immigrants and refugees in the U.S. (Verea 2018). Among other research, an article published by Synnøve Bendixsen (2020) summarizes several studies that suggest negative health impacts from suppressive immigration policy. For immigrants in France, "factors such as social stigmatization, precarious living conditions, and the climate of fear and suspicion caused by restrictive immigration policies," negatively affect health (Larchanché 2012; cited in Bendixsen 2020, 486). Additionally, immigrant populations may have less tangible access to health care rights and may feel less of a "sense of entitlement to such rights," (486). Similarly, in the Netherlands, "fear of the authorities, together with a lack of knowledge about rights or lack of support networks, contribute to a situation where undocumented people avoid healthcare providers, unless it is an emergency. This worsens their health status" (Hintjens, Siegmann, and Staring 2020; cited in Bendixsen 2020, 486). In situations like these, fighting for the health of immigrants often falls to nonprofit organizations (Bendixsen).

Despite these findings in relation to adult immigrants, there is an evidentiary lacuna of qualitative explorations on children of immigrants' perceptions and health. The

COVID-19 pandemic makes this issue even more relevant, as new data suggests structural factors make marginalized groups, such as people of color and immigrants, more vulnerable to infection and death. Though research is still emerging on the structural vulnerability of certain groups of people in the pandemic, factors such as an infeasibility of complying with stay-at-home orders, lack of access to early treatment, and a baseline of experiencing more trauma and grief from personal and economic loss may help explain this increased susceptibility.

Internship and Current Study

The most focal actor in allowing this project to proceed was the organization where I conducted my fieldwork: Fanmi Nou. Fanmi Nou is a Boston neighborhood-based nonprofit organization that assists recent (having arrived to the U.S. within the last 10 years) immigrants and their families. The organization has an after-school and summer program for children and offers adult education classes. Fanmi Nou's members are active immigrant rights advocates and take part in or host larger community events intended to inform and franchise immigrant populations. My study population comprises people who receive services from or are staff members at Fanmi Nou. This includes children that attend the organization's after-school program, their parents, and the staff members that interact with these children.

In this study, I sought to address the research gap of qualitative explorations of children's perceptions by putting forth several preliminary research questions that helped guide its design and implementation. What are the lived experiences of children of

immigrants related to parental immigration? How do these lived experiences inform the interactions children of immigrants have with other children in the after-school/summer program and with staff members at the program? How does a multi-service nonprofit organization function in a system that marginalizes Black immigrant bodies?

Chapter Overview

Chapter Two of this thesis traces the presence of the past in the present. I first describe how Fanmi Nou is structured and organized. I then outline events from Haitian history that highlight their deep connection to current immigration policies and U.S./Haiti relations, particularly how U.S. influence permeates Haiti's entire history. My discussion then flows into how Haitians are both perceived and represented in the U.S., and how this history and these representations are closely linked to the concept of trauma. I provide a partial literature review on topics relating to trauma, such as adjacent trauma terminology, mechanisms of transmission, and the limitations of the concept. I use the 2010 earthquake in Haiti to move away from broad generalizations about the concept, and to locate trauma in a Haitian context.

I also present the several theoretical frames that have helped shape the design and implementation of this research study. Invoking authors such as Merrill Singer, Erica James, and Paul Crawshaw, I discuss how critical medical anthropology, trauma portfolios, and the individualization of responsibility for health relate to the families and staff members at Fanmi Nou. I also briefly review the concepts of transnationalism and biculturalism, which link Haiti and the U.S. together in the lives of my collaborators at

Fanmi Nou. Last, I discuss how actors such as parents or institutions may prescribe children, like those at Fanmi Nou, identities.

Chapter Three follows the evolution of my study, as my research questions shifted and my ability to carry out my original data collection plan morphed into a completely virtual one. I discuss my entry into Fanmi Nou, my research design, and the foundations that make up my research methodology. I also review how I interviewed considering the COVID-19 pandemic, and the techniques and approaches I took when analyzing my data.

In Chapter Four, "Facilitating Choice," I argue that Fanmi Nou facilitates the process of selecting which aspects of American life to embrace, and which to refuse for the children and families that use its services. To facilitate these decisions, the organization must interact with larger structures and systems, often in seemingly contradictory ways. Facilitating choices offers actors at Fanmi Nou a sense of agency in making decisions about how they engage with U.S. systems, which positively impacts their health and wellbeing. I discuss one way that Fanmi Nou strategically engages with systems, by both perpetuating a status quo while simultaneously advocating for change. I also review the qualities that enable Fanmi Nou to facilitate children's and families' choices, and how the organization and its constituents engaged with an altered system in the COVID-19 pandemic. I place children at the after-school program within a network of multiple relationships, and consider how these relationships affect children's choice of which aspects of American life (i.e. culture, values, norms, and practices) to adopt and reject.

In Chapter Five, "Identity Formation," I examine what cultivating an identity looks like in the context of anti-immigrant rhetoric, and argue that children at Fanmi Nou forge bicultural identities amid this rhetoric. I link a strong ethnic identification to the promotion of health. I discuss how the concepts of transnationalism and biculturalism apply to different categories of participants at Fanmi Nou. I build upon Joseph Dumit's (2010) "objective self-fashioning" and discuss how children may engage in a type of *bicultural self-fashioning,* by incorporating their external environments into their conceptions of self. I also include a discussion about how staff members and parents at Fanmi Nou distinguish between Haitian-born and American-born children, and how these processes of distinction relate to identity development. Next, I argue that children at Fanmi Nou positively identify with Haiti. Parents, staff members, Fanmi Nou as an institution, and other children all encourage this identification in various ways.

In the chapter titled, "Bridging the Gap," I maintain that Fanmi Nou operates in a system of low resources, but uses both the power of information and community, and various forms of Pierre Bourdieu's capital, to assist their families. Both of these mechanisms of providing information and community are tied to positive health outcomes. Fanmi Nou, its staff members, parents, and children all engage in different processes of identifying deficiencies, or gaps, and figuring out how to reconcile, or bridge, them. Two major types of gaps identified by those I interviewed are between immigrant and non-immigrant communities, and between Haitian-born and American-born children. Within and outside of Fanmi Nou, community operates at several levels, often simultaneously.

Over the course of my fieldwork and data analysis, this study has taken on new meanings. It has become both a study of Fanmi Nou as an organization, and one of conducting ethnographic fieldwork in the time of a pandemic. The very structures that my study sought to investigate were drastically altered midway through. In many ways (and to my surprise) the pandemic did not *limit* the lens through which I framed my study, but rather it *changed* it. Before diving into this reimagined exploration, it is necessary to gain an understanding of the background of Fanmi Nou as an organization, the history of Haiti and the U.S.'s political relationship, and the theoretical frames on which this study relies.

CHAPTER TWO: Background

In December 2019, I attended a community forum where lawyers explained recent changes in immigration policy, such as revisions of the Public Charge Rule and new Temporary Protected Status (TPS) designations. It was held in a neighborhood of Boston, home to many Haitian immigrants. At the forum, representatives from the legal sector answered questions while community members sought to learn all they could about these complicated and seemingly ever-changing policies. A key goal of this forum was to enable people to decipher fact from rumor, so they could make informed decisions for themselves and their families.

At the beginning of this community forum, a local Haitian pastor led us all in prayer. I would like to admit that I rarely pray. Hoping to learn by observation, I glanced furtively at the people around me and bowed my head as they bowed theirs. I listened, earnestly, to a pastor speak in a language I wish I spoke and engaged in an activity with which I wish I was more familiar.

In this chapter, I provide detail about the organization that so graciously allowed me entry into their space and made this research project possible. I review just a small fragment of the complicated history between Haiti and the United States and connect it to current immigration policy and the experiences of Haitian immigrants in Boston. I pursue the pattern of U.S. interference and undermining of Haitian independence, which then produced the very immigration "crisis" denounced by many actors in the United States. Using diaspora scholar, Regine O. Jackson's (2011) chapter in *Geographies of the Haitian Diaspora*, I review part of the forming of a Haitian community in Boston. I

situate the timing of the creation of Fanmi Nou in a temporal frame, relating it to immigration detention in United States, and offer background on several immigration policies I perceived as most pertinent to my collaborators at Fanmi Nou. I then use the imperfect concept of trauma to discuss how actors in the United States have represented Haitians, historically. These representations relate to the process of identity formation for immigrant youth, which plays a major role in child health and wellbeing. This project relies on several theoretical frameworks, which I will outline at greater length in this chapter.

Fanmi Nou

Fanmi Nou, the multi-service nonprofit organization I would come to partner with for my internship and research, helped organize the community forum I attended in December. Based primarily out of one residential neighborhood in Boston, Fanmi Nou serves immigrant families in surrounding neighborhoods. Fanmi Nou assists recent immigrants to the United States. The majority of families that use its services have been in the country for five years or fewer. It supports mostly Haitian immigrants (about 70% of families are of Haitian origin), but, as the organization emphasizes, their programming is open to any immigrant. Participating families also come from other countries, including the Dominican Republic, Brazil, and Cape Verde. Immigrants or children of immigrants, many Haitian or of Haitian descent, make up the majority of the staff and leadership of Fanmi Nou.

The organization subscribes to a philosophy called a 'village model,' in which programming integrates children, parents, and grandparents. The student is at the center of the village model, with two concentric circles surrounding them. In the inner circle exists the student's school, home, and neighborhood. Adult actors populate each of these inner circle locations. For example, the school's adult actors are teachers, administrators, and staff. In the outer circle exists a student's 1) community of churches, colleges, and universities, 2) health centers and hospitals, 3) community-based organizations, volunteers, and tutors, 4) libraries, businesses, and grocery stores, 5) philanthropic organizations, and 6) legal representatives, policymakers, and advocates.

Fanmi Nou's programming includes both education (for children and adults) and advocacy components. An after-school program assists nearly 300 children pre-kindergarten through high school age during the afternoon hours and into the evening throughout Boston's academic school year. Teachers and volunteers at the children's after-school program give individual and small group homework help to their students. The program also offers students a chance to take part in a variety of extracurricular activities, including playing musical instruments, learning chess, coding, and test preparation for certain school requirements. As a continuation of the after-school program, Fanmi Nou provides similar programming for children during the summer. During the mornings of the summer program, students work on mathematics and English language arts, while in the afternoon students engage in extracurricular activities. Fanmi Nou adapted its programming to accommodate remote learning (through the video

conferencing software, Zoom) during the COVID-19 pandemic, beginning in the spring of 2020.

The adult education programming supplies classes in English as a Second Language and computer skills, which the organization has offered remotely during the COVID-19 pandemic. One ongoing project Fanmi Nou is working on that will benefit families is an online hub for resources, such as job opportunities, and housing, healthcare, and education options. Founders intend this program as a "one-stop" platform to help immigrants navigate the unfamiliar landscape and connect them to services and resources in the Boston area.

The advocacy component of Fanmi Nou's programming gives people up-to-date information on immigration-related developments through social media and community forums. Fanmi Nou fosters youth advocacy in partnership with Boston Public Schools by training high school age students in effective advocacy techniques. When including the children's programs, adult programs, advocacy, and community outreach programs, Fanmi Nou serves over 5,700 individuals. As a mutual aid organization for immigrants, Fanmi Nou exists as a type of mediating institution. It mediates between a shared history of immigration from Haiti, and a new series of steps to navigate in the U.S. In this way, the community and family of Fanmi Nou support health. Actively supporting health encompasses providing resources like education, cultural and economic integration, family support, and the above-mentioned mediation with U.S. institutions.

Political Relationship of Haiti and the United States

To grasp how members of Fanmi Nou operate within the United States today, it is imperative to have, at a minimum, an introductory understanding of both Haiti's history, and the complex political relationship between the U.S. and Haiti. Unfortunately, there is a long history of hostility against Haiti and Haitians living in the United States. As Raymond Audain (2019) discusses, one can link the historical, political milieu surrounding Haitian immigration to the U.S. to the racist underpinning of today's legal system. Both Audain and Laurent Dubois (2012) trace the U.S.'s wariness towards Haitians back to the Haitian Revolution. This 1791 slave revolt—the largest and most successful in history—paved the way for a general-in-chief of the Haitian revolutionaries, Jean-Jacques Dessalines, to overtake the French in Saint-Domingue in 1803 (Dubois 2012). The French colony of Saint-Domingue became the independent nation of Haiti. Parts of Europe and the United States felt threatened by such a triumphant Black uprising, which contributed to their refusal to recognize Haiti's sovereignty. France eventually acknowledged Haiti's independence (two decades later), but did so with a caveat. As a twisted punishment for their independence, France demanded Haiti pay a 150-million-franc indemnity to "compensate the slaveholders for their losses" (Dubois 2012, 7). Despite a later reduction in the indemnity, by 1914, Haiti's government had to allot 80% of their budget to paying off France.

Besides French intervention, the U.S. did not recognize Haiti's independence until 1862 (Audain 2019), and would soon become another major barrier to Haitian prosperity. Despite this formal recognition, our government took systematic political and economic

steps over the following decades to undermine and marginalize Haiti as a sovereign nation. Under the guise of restoring political order, the U.S. marines began what would become their 19-year occupation of Haiti in 1914, economically exploiting the nation and killing thousands of Haitians in the process (Audain 2019; Dubois 2012). At the beginning of this occupation, U.S. marines seized $500,000 worth of the Haitian government's gold (equating to $11 million today) from the Banque Nationale d'Haïti, with the rationale of ensuring Haiti would pay off the debts they had to pay France (Dubois 2012). Ultimately, the U.S. forced Haiti into an economic spiral, with the assumption that we would be the ones to pull them out, gaining more control of the seemingly less sovereign nation. Many veiled the U.S. marine occupation in terms of humanitarian assistance, even though it largely furthered our own business interests. Amongst the numerous repercussions of this prolonged occupation was an outflow of Haitians from their own nation, as U.S. agricultural companies appropriated their farming land (Dubois 2012).

Another contributing factor for Haitian migration occurred in 1991, when a US-supported, trained, and funded coup d'état forced the democratically elected, leftist president of Haiti, Jean-Bertrand Aristide, out of office. Because of factors such as violence by the Haitian army and paramilitary and U.S. sanctions that deepened their poverty, many Haitians fled to the United States for asylum. Far from welcoming these migrants with open arms, U.S. officials either detained or sent the refugees back to Haiti "with the accusation that they were fleeing from poverty rather than politically motivated terror" (James 2004, 485). These accusations of Haitians being economic migrants versus

political refugees did not begin in the 1990s, however. Besides the economic exploitation and U.S.-created dependency on outside nations, the United States supported two of the most nefarious dictators in Haitian history: François and Jean-Claude Duvalier ("Papa Doc" and "Baby Doc") (Dubois 2012). As Haitians fled the Duvalier government in the 1970s and 1980s, the same rhetoric was used to prevent Haitians from being eligible for political asylum.

Haitians were not just subject to prejudice when attempting to gain entrance to the U.S., but after successful immigration as well. For example, in 1990, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) banned blood donations from Haitians, helping to foster and feed the harmful association of Haitians with HIV/AIDS (Audain 2019; Farmer 1992). With increasing levels of specificity, this historical discrimination singled out immigrants, Black immigrants, and Black Haitian immigrants. These instances illustrate that individual actors are not the only or primary producers of bias against Haitians. It is inscribed into the political and legal workings of a society and becomes institutionalized. The protracted stigmatizing of Haitians in the U.S. functions as a backdrop to what Haitian children and families at Fanmi Nou experience now.

Haitians in Boston

When discussing Haitians in Boston, it is important to establish that the diaspora is not merely Haiti transposed to the United States. Haitian Boston is a distinct community too. In her book, *Geographies of the Haitian Diaspora*, Jackson (2011) traces the beginnings of a Haitian diasporic community in Boston, Massachusetts through

several historical events. Among them, the assault of a Haitian man, Yvon Jean-Louis, in 1974, and the nomination for lieutenant governor of a Haitian woman, Marie St. Fleur, in 2006, foreground the role that race and racism played in the establishment of a diasporic community. Rather than only commenting on Haitian attempts at exhibiting a Haitian exceptionalism and distancing themselves from Black Americans (cf. Waters 1994), Jackson engages in a more nuanced discussion of how "early [Haitian] settlers used the notion of a Haitian diaspora to structure opportunities," (150). Jackson also wanders into the realm of transnationalism, a term I will discuss at greater length later, to explain how Haitian nationalism could operate in Boston.

Though census data may not reflect the actual number of Haitians living in Massachusetts, as of 2011, estimates by consulate officials and community leaders pointed towards seventy-five or one hundred thousand Haitian residents in the state (Jackson 2011). The Haitian community in Boston developed slowly, partially through four different waves. As a result, the contemporary community comprises "a mix of old and new Haitian nationals, a large and varied second generation (many of whom were born and raised in Boston), as well as a budding third generation of Haitian (African) American and Haitian Cape Verdean youth," (143).

Jackson (2011) documents a change in viewpoint for many Haitian immigrants after one of the historical events she recounts in this chapter: the murder of two Mattapan (a neighborhood of Boston) residents while visiting Port-au-Prince. Initially, many viewed Haitian migration to Boston as a temporary move. People planned to return to Haiti in the future. This perception evolved into a "one-way ticket" type of shift in

thinking after Alicia and Willy Merisier, were murdered on a trip back to Haiti in 1997. After word of this event spread, Haitian immigrants in Boston began imagining themselves as more permanent members of a Haitian diaspora in Boston (Jackson).

Immigration Legislation

Though the focus of this thesis is not a recounting of the immigration policies that were in effect during my ethnographic fieldwork, this policy backdrop shapes everything that I have done to interact with Fanmi Nou. The U.S.'s historical, political relationship with Haiti and the lasting, disillusioned, and harmful attitudes towards Haitians relate to the immigration policies and decisions in play today. A small group of Haitian-Bostonians founded Fanmi Nou in 2015. Pre-dating the Trump administration's policies, Fanmi Nou emerged during the Obama administration, out of an onslaught of renewed restrictive immigration detention policies dating back to the early 1980s.

In his book, *Detain and Punish: Haitian Refugees and the Rise of the World's Largest Immigration Detention System*, Carl Lindskoog (2018) explains that the U.S.'s contemporary reliance on detention as an immigration control measure has a relatively recent history. Specifically, he asserts the centrality of Haitian experiences to immigration detention in the United States: the U.S. "government's efforts to exclude Haitian asylum seekers in the 1970s cleared the way for the formal return of detention in 1981" (2). Initially, the Reagan administration applied this reinstituted detention policy solely to Haitians, but as evidenced today, its application became much broader.

Lindskoog (2018) describes how though immigration detention is technically designed to be administrative, it has punitive consequences. In the 1990s it became more closely linked to criminal law, particularly due to two laws passed in 1996. One law, the Antiterrorism and Effective Death Penalty Act (AEDPA), "expedited the deportation process for noncitizens convicted of a crime and imposed mandatory detention on those awaiting deportation" (133). The other, the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act (IIRIRA), "expanded the list of offenses that were classified as aggravated felonies" (134).[1] Together, these laws helped produce a massive increase in the number of Haitians detained at immigration detention centers. The implementation of these types of restrictive immigration policies spanned multiple administrations. Under the Clinton administration, in the mid-1990s, Haitian refugees (including unaccompanied children) were detained at the U.S. naval base, Guantanamo Bay (Lindskoog 2018).

Fanmi Nou was founded during the Obama administration, in the wake of this reinstitution of a state of immigrant detention described above. The effects of this state continue to be felt today and were an impetus for the creation of organizations like Fanmi Nou. In September 2016, the Department of Homeland Security published a statement by Secretary Johnson outlining his directive to resume deportations of Haitians after the temporary cessation due to the 2010 earthquake ("Statement by Secretary Johnson Concerning His Directive to Resume Regular Removals to Haiti" 2016). Thus, the Trump

[1] The IIRIRA also "required detention for all 'criminal aliens' that had been sentenced to at least one year (even if they were never required to do any time)" and "applied the new definition of aggravated felony retroactively," effectively causing arrest, detention, and/or deportation for immigrants who in the past had been convicted of minor crimes (p. 134). The IIRIRA also put an end to judicial review, where judges were able to make decisions about detention and deportation using a variety of factors.

administration's restrictive immigration policies were not an aberration from what had come before, but rather a less palatable continuation and amplification of his predecessor's policies. While contending with the historical and contemporary effects of these policies (including those implemented by the Obama administration around the time Fanmi Nou was founded), the Trump administration subjected Haitians in the U.S. to a more overt type of discrimination.

Former President Trump's discriminatory rhetoric was not just rhetoric. It manifested as actual policy that affected Haitian immigrants in the U.S., and thus my interlocuters at Fanmi Nou. A *PBS News Hour* article published in January 2019 described a New York trial over the Trump administration's 2017 decision to end the TPS program for Haitians (Geller 2019). In this case, lawyers for immigrants linked Trump's racist rhetoric (e.g. the "shithole countries" comment) to the racially biased policy of ending TPS. Here, policy regarding Haitian TPS departed from previous policy. As the lawyers argued, the Trump administration did not adhere to the typical process of decision making based on Departments of State and Homeland Security analysis, but rather "rewrote or edited those findings to suit their purposes" (Geller 2019).

In another example, in August of 2019, news sources reported the Trump administration's intention to end the Obama administration-era immigration policy, the Haitian Family Reunification Parole Program. Under this program, "family members of U.S. citizens and lawful permanent residents, who were living in Haiti and had already been approved for a family-based immigrant visa, had their reunification in the U.S. fast-tracked" (Charles 2019). Immigrant rights advocates argued that, like for the decision to

end TPS, analyses of conditions in Haiti falsely concluded the country could safely absorb Haitian nationals. As one advocate noted, this immigration policy news differed from others, in that advocates were not warned ahead of time of the proposed change (Charles 2019).

Two other immigration policies, the Public Charge Rule and TPS, were amongst the most discussed during my time of ethnographic fieldwork at Fanmi Nou. In the Public Charge Rule, a person is considered a "public charge" if they depend upon government benefits. A public charge is a person who receives "one or more of the public benefits for more than 12 months, in total, within any 36-month period," ("Public Charge Fact Sheet | USCIS" 2020). According to the Immigrant Legal Resource Center, Public Charge is technically a ground of inadmissibility; it is a reason "a person could be denied a green card, visa, or admission into the United States" ("Public Charge | Immigrant Legal Resource Center | ILRC" n.d.). The state tests individuals for their likelihood to become a public charge and can deny admission and citizenship based upon this determination.

The other commonly discussed policy, TPS, only applies to immigrants from certain countries at certain times. In general, and as its name implies, TPS provides impermanent legal resident status to immigrants fleeing their home countries for reasons such as armed conflict or natural disaster (Buckel 2010). Among other entitlements, a TPS designation also allows people to work legally in the United States. The Obama administration granted Haitians TPS after the 2010 earthquake for a limited period, with several extensions and attempts at overturning extensions taking place. The path to TPS is not necessarily a simple or easy one, however. Rules and regulations about TPS for

Haitians have been inconsistent. By frequently changing TPS policy, the administration has placed TPS holders in a precarious position. For example, in 2017 the Trump administration decided to end TPS for Haitian immigrants in the United States, effective in July 2019 (Edmonds 2017). After two court cases (Ramos v. Nielsen and Saget v. Trump), TPS designation for Haitians is now in effect until October 2021 ("Temporary Protected Status Designated Country: Haiti | USCIS" 2020; "Temporary Protected Status: An Overview" 2017). [2] Though TPS is not a form of, or path to, full "citizenship" in the U.S., the theoretical concept, *flexible citizenship*, relates to the uncertain position into which immigration legislation, such as TPS, places immigrants (Ong, 1999; cited in Mountz et al. 2002). Flexible citizenship prescribes that immigrants navigate different categories of citizenship, along with the resources that go along with these. With TPS, citizenship (or protections similar to those afforded to citizens) is, quite literally, flexible.

Representations of Haitians and Trauma

Though I was initially interested in theories of intergenerational trauma and trauma transmission between immigrant parents and their children, this thesis does not provide a deep exploration of the concept of trauma, or how it can be transmitted. It is important, however, to review some contextual trauma knowledge, as it is a concept closely tied to U.S. perceptions of Haiti. One specific historical stereotype of Haiti and Haitians that persists in the U.S. is that of Haiti as a "target of intervention" (James 2004, 483). This stereotype of Haiti and of Haitians is rooted in the series of historical events I

[2] Accessed February 2021; TPS designations for Haiti may have changed since then

previously chronicled. U.S. representations of Haiti are often monolithic, presenting the nation solely in terms of political upheaval, natural disaster, or abject poverty. These simplified perceptions may foster attitudes where Haitians are represented largely as victims, or incapable of self-governance. Several terms related to the concept of trauma help construct this conceptualization of Haitians as victims in need of intervention. In her article on humanitarian aid work in Haiti, Erica James (2004) discusses how bureaucrats, activists, and other humanitarian and development actors can reduce the experiences of individuals, families, and communities into documentary packages of victimhood, called *trauma portfolios.* Trauma portfolios are an aggregate form of representations of suffering, which often include the *trauma narrative*. These told stories of trauma can serve to "prove" or "verify" the suffering of individuals. Trauma narratives and trauma portfolios are intended to be avenues towards care. Part of James's argument is that people may internalize or adopt a victim identity. In post-coup Haiti, the designation of "viktim" (a term James uses to denote the very specific type of persistent violence experienced by Haitians) conferred symbolic capital on a person. As people were trying to survive in an aid economy, it granted them access to certain kinds of aid.

However, bureaucratized forms of trauma care help create a related concept, *occult economies of trauma* (James 2004). In these occult economies of trauma, standardized humanitarian intervention tactics intended to make past suffering and experiences of trauma productive, may actually "generate new forms of victimization," thus producing more suffering (484). Occult economies of trauma and trauma portfolios

do not allow an individual to be in control of their own trauma. Instead, institutions (e.g. state, humanitarian, development, and charity institutions) appropriate it.

Defining Trauma

A portion of my thesis explores children's perceptions of their parents' immigration experiences, particularly how a parent's experience of something considered traumatic affects their children. I do not want to assume that all immigrants have experienced trauma, that all children pick up on this trauma, that different people conceptualize trauma in the same way, or even that we should include the term "trauma" in discussions about immigration experiences. It is, however, reasonable to hypothesize that a hostility sanctioned by the highest order of leadership in the United States towards Black immigrants could be traumatic. I also would like to acknowledge that people may narrate trauma in different ways. Though I did not ask members of Fanmi Nou about trauma, specifically, in interviews, we got into discussions of topics that many people might consider trauma experiences. This connection between trauma, children, and parents requires a discussion of some terminology found in the literature. I aim to steer away from definitions that dictate trauma results from single, isolated events. I instead use a broader definition of trauma that encompasses historical trauma, transmittable trauma, and trauma resulting from experiences as an immigrant in the United States. I define secondary trauma as the indirect exposure to trauma that children pick up on from parents and outside sources of information, such as interactions in school.

The paradigm of structural violence frames how some trauma and violence is unrelenting, and often invisible, to those weighed down by it. Structural violence is a well-known term amongst trauma, violence, and discrimination theorists. Galtung (1969) contrasts this type of violence to personal, or direct violence, by noting that in structural violence, individual actors are less visible in the perpetration of harm. Instead, the "violence is built into the structure and shows up as unequal power and consequently as unequal life chances" (71). This violence is much more insidious, and less easily identifiable. Importantly, however, as Paul Farmer (1996) notes in his essay, "On Suffering and Structural Violence: A View from Below" structural violence is "the consequence, direct or indirect, of human agency" (271).

The ability for the traumatic experiences of parents (or their negative effects) to be passed onto children is widespread in the literature. Authors in anthropology and psychology have offered concepts such as historical, intergenerational, and secondary trauma, or trauma transmission to put a name to this phenomenon. The concepts of historical and intergenerational trauma have been most documented in literature on Holocaust survivors and Native Americans, or other indigenous groups that have experienced attempted genocide. With reference to Black Americans, Presumey-Leblanc (2020) argues historical trauma may help us "understand contemporary circumstances by looking at historical structural violence juxtaposed with individual choices, which work counteractively to positive health outcomes" (33).

Other Trauma Terms

A less documented, but related concept to intergenerational, historical, or secondary trauma, is that of empathic family stress. Authors Nicolas et al. (2009) introduce the concept of *empathic family stress*, in which individuals experience stress in response to the difficult life events of their family members. Though the authors claim a strengths-based approach for analyzing the role of empathic family stress, presenting it as a specific resource that signifies family cohesiveness, they also conclude that empathic family stress in Haitian immigrant families is related to depressive symptoms. Namely, as participant levels of empathic family stress in this study rose, so did levels of depressive symptoms. Researchers Lehrner and Yehuda (2018) discuss the concept of *embitterment,* to describe an individual's response to "severe, but normative, stressful events" (22). The authors differentiate this stress from stressors that are life-threatening, which may be a precursor of PTSD (Post Traumatic Stress Syndrome), whereas embitterment is not. Though I do not believe we can easily categorize an individual's response to stress simply based upon whether it was life threatening, it is important to familiarize ourselves with the current terminology regarding trauma and trauma transmission.

Mechanisms of Transmission

Some scholars in trauma studies attempt to identify mechanisms for transmission. Besides discussing embitterment, Lehrner and Yehuda (2018) provided different analytical levels through which to view the transmission of this trauma across generations. Of the modes of transmission discussed, several directly involve the parent-

child interaction, including learning and modeling. Lehrner and Yehuda propose "offspring may directly learn from parents to be fearful and anxious, that threat is everywhere, that the world is unsafe, and that people cannot be trusted" based upon both explicit guidance and subtle behaviors and cues of their parents (25).

In another example of learning and modeling as a mechanism for the transmission of trauma, Kohrt, Mendenhall, and Yarris (2016) describe how culturally meaningful manifestations of emotional distress may be socially learned and shared. In this example, a Nicaraguan woman migrates to Costa Rica to pursue work and give her family more financial stability. Authors explore this woman's children's perceptions of their parent's outmigration, noting the idiom of distress, *thinking too much*, and the ambivalence of a transnational family for the children. Unsurprisingly, research on the ways people mediate and mitigate trauma and its negative effects accompanied the emergence of research on trauma and its ability to impact children secondarily. A study by Margaret McLafferty and colleagues (2018) found that different social networks—including those with family and friends—may help quell psychopathology following adverse childhood experiences.

The 2010 Earthquake

Part of understanding Fanmi Nou's existence and goals is to be aware of major events in Haitian history that have generated trauma, elicited Haitian migration, and provoked diasporic responses. One such event in recent history that has affected the flow of Haitian immigration and immigration policies in the U.S. is the January 12th, 2010

earthquake in Haiti. Sparking the largest migration of Haitians to the U.S. in recent history, this magnitude 7.0 earthquake caused immense loss of Haitian life (an estimated 60,000 to 300,000 people perished) and life-altering injuries (Lundy 2011). The natural disaster was also responsible for the destruction of homes, commercial buildings, and government buildings, spurring a massive internal displacement crisis and adding to the increased movement of Haitian migrants to the United States. Dubois (2012) frames the 2010 earthquake as a devastation that brought the social cohesion of Haiti to the fore. In its aftermath, Haitian communities were observed as "rapidly mobilizing to deliver mutual aid," (12).

In the years following the earthquake, researchers investigated the responses of the Haitian diaspora in the U.S. While many studies focused on the experiences of Haitians directly impacted by the earthquake, other studies demonstrated the earthquake had significant psychological and social "ripple effects" on Haitians in the diaspora (Martinez et al. 2014). For example, Linda Martinez and colleagues explored the psychosocial impact of the 2010 earthquake on Haitians living in Somerville, Massachusetts. The authors described their research and data collection as a way to "bear witness" to the lived experiences and mental health of individuals in the earthquake's aftermath. Authors used epidemiologic scales for measuring depression and stress, and results suggested increased rates of both indicators in this group of Haitian immigrants following the earthquake (Martinez et al.). Martinez et al. also note how important family and social support is for participants' mental health.

Garvey Lundy (2011) also analyzed the effect of the earthquake on Haitians living in the U.S. The author used the concept of *long-distance nationalism*, in which individuals and communities engage in methods of support and rebuilding, even if from afar, to contemplate the ties between the Haitian diaspora and Haitians in Haiti. Though long-distance nationalism is not a newly experienced or theorized phenomenon, the earthquake and its aftermath brought into focus the existing forms of transnational solidarity between the diaspora and people living in Haiti. Lundy examined views on Haitian identity among second-generation immigrants during this time, noting that such individuals identified more strongly with Haiti after the earthquake. Jennifer Allen et al. (2016) sought to obtain the perceptions of Haitian immigrants in the wake of the January 2010 earthquake. A main finding from this study was an "enormous psychological, emotional, financial and physical toll experienced by Boston-area Haitians following the earthquake" (687). Like Lundy, Allen et al. brought attention to the diasporic transnationality of Haitians living in the United States and their persisting ties to Haiti. Lundy defines transnationalism as "the process by which immigrants fashion a multilayered relationship that actively binds them to their country of origin while they are simultaneously fully involved in the social activities of their country of settlement" (204). Researchers presented experiences of Haitian Bostonians forced to watch the earthquake's devastation from afar.

Although it has been over ten years since this devastating earthquake, the accounts in Allen et al.'s study, and from informants at Fanmi Nou, show that its effects continue to reverberate, like shock waves, throughout the Haitian community in the U.S.

I will discuss transnationalism, and a related term, biculturalism, at greater length in Chapter 5, "Identity Formation." I hope to present the earthquake as an amplification of the events that came before it in Haiti, rather than a departure. The devastation of the earthquake made pre-2010 violence in Haiti more visible.

Conceptual Limitations of Trauma

Though well documented in the literature, the concept of trauma and trauma research is also subject to critique. As discussed, researchers often measure secondary trauma by psychological symptoms as defined by the DSM (Diagnostic and Statistical Manual). Kohrt and Mendenhall (2015) argue that psychiatric diagnostic categories, such as those found in the various versions of the DSM, are not valid cross-culturally. These diagnostic categories are subject to change and may not actually represent trauma. Similarly, Hinton and Good (2015) examine the fit between PTSD as delineated in the DSM, and local forms of illness experience. The authors use two cultural histories associated with PTSD (the Vietnam war and child sexual abuse) to criticize the oversimplification of the DSM's PTSD as arising from these two historical frames. They argue it does not account for the vast array of trauma-related mental health disorders and purport that trauma is not always an isolated incident in the past. For example, though the experience of immigration may be traumatic, one cannot isolate it from the traumas of the stress and anticipation pre-migration and experiencing discrimination and uncertainty post-migration. PTSD, as a concept, is focused on limited traumatic events and does not take into consideration pervasive and complex traumas. Hinton and Good (2015) suggest

exploring local phenomenologies of post trauma experiences and symptoms. Similar to one of James's (2004) main critiques of the commodification of suffering, these authors caution that deployment of the concepts of trauma, PTSD, and trauma treatment may produce victims and pathologize societies.

Theoretical Frameworks

Though the concept of trauma, and the ways it is measured and employed, may not fully account for real human experience, it is a heavily used term in the literature. Several theoretical frameworks have guided the design and implementation of this study and help reconcile the limitations of the term trauma.

Critical Medical Anthropology

To help understand the experiences of Haitian immigrant families in Fanmi Nou, this project uses the theoretical framework of critical medical anthropology (CMA). Often uncovering sources of structural violence, or economies of trauma, as discussed above, CMA elucidates effects of social inequality on health, particularly for marginalized groups. Many of the collaborators in this project are part of several intersectional, marginalized identities: immigrants, children, Black. Merrill Singer (1995), a leading theorist in CMA, describes the discipline, in part, as an effort to understand interactions between health and a range of forces at different levels: "the macrolevel of political economy, the national level of political and class structure, the institutional level of the health care system, the community level of popular and folk

beliefs and actions, the microlevel of illness experience, behavior, and meaning, human physiology, and environmental factors" (81). By providing a more inclusive analysis of factors that impact families at Fanmi Nou, CMA allows me to analyze my interlocutors' experiences through larger, macro-level structures. It also helps me analyze the power dynamics inherent in the interactions between my informants and these structures, namely the power imbalances that lead to suffering. CMA grants me the opportunity to view how broad institutional structures affect the population of my research focus on an individual level.

To more clearly envision the impact that hyper-local context (the very specific and immediate environment) has on immigrant families, Parin Dossa's (2009) concept of *disabling worlds* is helpful. In her book, *Racialized Bodies, Disabling Worlds: Storied Lives of Immigrant Muslim Women,* Dossa posits that rather than conceptualizing a disabled person as inhabiting a space, it is more useful to think of a space as having the ability to render a person disabled; a context, an environment, a world can disable. In Dossa's study, immigrant Muslim women appear to become disabled only after migrating to Canada. This author differentiates between the social model of disability and the medical model of disability, stressing that the social model locates disability in an individual's environment, while the medical model locates it in the body. If originated in society, the responsibility for "treating" or stopping the mechanism that disables rests, too, in society. I would like to propose that similar to how the world was disabling for Muslim immigrant women in Dossa's research, the United States is *debilitating* for Haitian immigrants. The historical and contemporary treatment of Haitians in the United

States demonstrates a debilitating world in action. Through restrictive immigration policies and hostility towards Black immigrants, resettling in Boston might debilitate Haitian immigrants and their children.

The United States as a Detriment to Health

The concept of disabling worlds intersects with a theme in the literature on immigration to the United States: recognition that the U.S., as a space, may be a detriment to an immigrant and immigrant family's health. Some researchers have linked living in the United States to worsened health outcomes for immigrants. For example, (Alderete et al. 2000) examined the association between time spent in the U.S. and mental health, as measured by DSM-III-R criteria for psychiatric disorders. The authors cite a positive association between time spent in the U.S. and the experience of certain psychiatric disorders, particularly affective disorders and drug dependence, and particularly in indigenous Mexican immigrants. Belizaire and Fuertes (2011) measured a different mental health outcome, quality of life, and found that as the number of years a Haitian immigrant lived in the United States increased, they reported a lower quality of life.

Whereas some researchers measured mental health outcomes associated with time spent in the U.S. and health, others evaluated physical outcomes. Strickman-Stein et al. (2010) calculated body mass index (BMI) as it related to the time Haitian immigrant children lived in the United States, specifically in Miami, Florida. Strickman-Stein et al. used retrospective data from medical charts to suggest that Haitian-born children's BMI

percentile increases (by 3.7%) each year they reside in the U.S. Though BMI may not be the most useful proxy for health, this study presents an example of research that investigates the physical outcomes of time spent in the U.S., particularly amongst Haitian immigrant children. Inconsistent with the framework of CMA, this article did not discuss the possible structural and institutional forces that act upon the bodies of Haitian children to produce these discrepancies in BMI and health.

Duncan (2015) strengthens the position that the United States, as a nation, can be detrimental to immigrant health. In her article, Duncan bridges the worlds of migration, mental health, and culture to convey the experiences of Oaxacan migrant workers in the U.S. who return to Mexico to seek mental health treatment. The author describes "transnational disorders" as disorders produced and experienced across multiple countries. Her analysis makes clear the features of structural vulnerability that contribute to Oaxacan migrant disability:

> They [migrant workers] are relied on for labor yet largely viewed as criminals; they work in the most dangerous labor sectors yet are largely excluded from the health care system; they are positioned at the bottom of the socioeconomic ladder yet lack labor rights; and they are blamed by many for the U.S.'s economic ills and viewed as drains on anemic social welfare programs yet simultaneously barred from accessing many such programs (26).

In this way, forces within the U.S. produce mental health disorders. When migrants return to Oaxaca, the psychiatric providers are unsure as to the course of treatment. Two distinct geographical locations sustain disorder. I argue that this is an example of the U.S. as a debilitating world; it produced disorder that was not previously present in Oaxacan workers who migrated here. These examples report various poor outcomes for

immigrants. Connecting the U.S.—as a social, political, and economic space—to poor immigrant health is more about how structures in this country treat immigrants, rather than about any characteristics of individuals themselves. Findings about immigrant health as a function of time spent in the United States made me question how this applies to Haitian immigrant families at Fanmi Nou. In what ways might Boston be a detriment to the health of these families, and these children?

Individualization of Responsibility for Health

By considering how external forces affect an individual's ability to be healthy in a particular society, one can focus research efforts at "changing the social context of a targeted population rather than the target population itself" (Singer 1995, 96). This approach to research and intervention helps remove undue blame from marginalized populations and places it on the larger forces that create the circumstances in which marginalized populations are forced to live. Though this approach is the goal, many health interventions remain focused on changing individual behavior.

Crawshaw (2012) draws on a Foucauldian idea of health governance to discuss the notion of the *individualization of responsibility for health.* In this model, individuals are both blamed for their ill health, and held responsible for cultivating their wellbeing. For example, social marketing strategies, such as advertisements, attempt to educate individuals about their health. These advertisements seek to produce well-informed decision makers. By placing the responsibility of health and wellbeing solely in the hands of the individual, societies may avoid addressing larger social factors that play major

roles in shaping the health of marginalized communities, a group often considered "at risk" for poor health outcomes. How is it that certain people are at increased risk compared to other people? They are not inherently at risk, but they are at risk because of structural and social forces. For my participants at Fanmi Nou, these forces are those that shape the current climate on immigration and race.

An individualization of responsibility for health is closely linked to stigma. Brewis and Wutich (2019) argue that with many health conditions (i.e. obesity, poor hygiene, and mental illness), societies deem individuals culpable. The danger of this individualization of responsibility for health is that it can turn into value judgments about personal character, resulting in stigma. Even well-intentioned public health interventions may play a role in exacerbating, shaming, and even creating stigma when it was not previously there. Some health interventions wield stigma as a tool to pressure individual behavior, often ineffectively (Brewis and Wutich 2019). For example, a public health intervention, the Community-Led Total Sanitation project, intentionally created stigma around open defecation with the goal of creating a powerful and emotional shock in people to change their individual behavior. Ultimately, this intervention did not take into account social factors and cultural context, and was unsuccessful, and even made matters worse. Here, stigma was effective for the stated goal of changing human behavior, but changing individual behavior was not the answer to problems of health inequities. Haitian immigrants in Boston may be well accustomed to experiences of stigma, as exemplified by the previously mentioned ban on blood donations from Haitians in 1990, and perpetuated by rhetoric like Trump's "shithole countries" comment (Dawsey 2018).

Labeling Vulnerability

I argue that labeling individuals using terms such as "vulnerable" or "at-risk" acts as a mechanism for the individualization of responsibility for health and occurrences of stigma. The overapplication of these terms may contribute to both making individuals responsible for their good health and blaming individuals for their poor health. Panter-Brick (2014) discusses the history of vulnerability terminology, specifically the terms "risk" and "resilience." The authors provide a warning, of sorts, when using this language. The concepts of risk and resilience are both interdisciplinary and misleading when taken from an epidemiologic context and applied to individual people. Specifically, Panter-Brick cautions against the overapplication of these terms from population-level, statistical usage to individual attribute-level usage, noting that this overapplication "all-too-easily blends statistical statements with personal attributes and biosocial categorization" (433). If individual attributes make one vulnerable or at-risk, the responsibility for countering these vulnerabilities may also rest in the hands of the individual.

One of the main issues vulnerability terminology presents is that this focus on individual responsibility draws attention away from larger structures that create the greatest obstacles for individuals engaging with U.S. based systems, such as the legal, educational, and healthcare systems. The way society frames a problem directly connects to how people address it (Goffman and Berger 1986). If portrayed as an individual's problem, the solution is framed at the level of the individual as well. When labeling

certain experiences, such as immigration to the U.S., as traumatic, I risk the possibility of perpetuating the blame of individual caregivers for children's secondary, or learned, trauma. To combat this risk, I need to contextualize experiences that may be traumatic in the broader sociopolitical landscape, helping to remove responsibility from individual actors. My discussion of Haiti and the U.S.'s historical relationship, and my reliance on the theoretical frameworks discussed above have started that conversation.

Identity Prescription

The processes of trauma transmission, labeling, and blame and responsibility for health send both direct and indirect messages to children about their identities. Many researchers have written about the factors that construct children's identities. I will discuss the process of identity formation for the children at Fanmi Nou, specifically, at greater length in the following chapters, but I touch on some of this background now. Though individuals take an agentive role in their self-identification, caregivers may "choose" identification pathways for their children that transverse multiple arenas of identity. First-generation immigrant parents, or other adult family members, may *prescribe* identities for their second-generation children. Doucet's (2011) qualitative study shows this identity prescription by exploring how Haitian immigrant parents in the Greater Boston area "negotiate the boundaries around home and school" (2705). Doucet suggests Haitian immigrant parents may deliberately encourage boundaries between the two spheres of home and school, perhaps to quell 'Americanization'. These parents intentionally keep home and school distinct, perhaps in a protective effort for their

children to avoid the discrimination that often goes along with being a young African American in the United States.

Mary Waters' (1994) work reflects the concerns of these Haitian parents by comparing identity descriptions of second-generation and first-generation immigrant adolescents. This comparative study of ethnic and racial identities of Black immigrants led to the creation of different identity categories that lend themselves to different perceptions of race and opportunity in the U.S. One of Waters' propositions is that "youngsters who identify as black Americans tend to see more racial discrimination and limits to opportunities for blacks in the United States", with the opposite being true for adolescents who identify as ethnic West Indians (795). This suggestion reminds me of anecdotal data I collected when initially interviewing one of Fanmi Nou's leaders. She noticed that children who were immigrants themselves were, perhaps, more academically motivated than their U.S. born and raised counterparts.

I also see this identity prescription in Mary Shepard's (2005) dissertation about Somali youths in a Northeastern high school. After extensive respondent interviewing, Shepard found that in the post 9/11 era, Somali youths identified most strongly as Muslims, instead of their previously strongest identifier, Somalis. This finding may point to the role outside society can have in prescribing certain identities to individuals. Here, identity prescription does not come from family members, but from American society. As I continued this thesis project, questions of identity and identity development for the children at Fanmi Nou became more central to it.

Foreshadowing

My discussions of Haiti's history, its political relationship with the United States, and the concept of trauma may very well perpetuate this perception of Haiti as a "target of intervention" that I have been aiming to avoid. It is important to shed light on health discrepancies between groups of people, however it is equally important to highlight marginalized communities' strength despite the factors that threaten it. Without wanting to fall back on the word "resilience" to describe the community at Fanmi Nou, I have observed numerous instances when children, parents, and staff members have sought to combat the restrictive category of being a Black immigrant in the United States. To return to the December community forum, before the days of mask-wearing and social distancing to prevent the spread of COVID-19, where I sat in a folding chair, notebook in hand, I heard three words that got at the heart of this community's agency and strength. These words foreshadowed a theme I would come to notice in many of my interactions at Fanmi Nou. To transition into the portion of the forum where lawyers would share with us their expertise, the Haitian pastor that had been leading us in prayer proclaimed: "Information is power."

CHAPTER THREE: Methodology

The focus of this qualitative ethnographic research study was to investigate the perceptions of health and wellbeing among children of Haitian immigrants in a Boston after-school and summer program. Though originally designed to explore these children's perceptions of their caregivers' immigration-related experiences, this study became a broader exploration of how children of immigrants forge bicultural and transnational lives, and how a multi-service center for immigrants functions in the current sociopolitical climate. My interest in this topic emerged from experiences working with children and out of a conversation with the director of what would become the organization where I conducted my fieldwork: Fanmi Nou. The perceptions of children and the adult figures in their immediate environments relate to their health and wellbeing, which is a topic that carries a unique salience in today's political climate. The number of immigrants in the U.S. population has increased in recent decades (Budiman 2020), while anti-immigrant rhetoric has taken the public stage.

The Field Site

Okay. Take the red line to Bennett, then the blue line to Ironwood. Find the number 80 bus stop to North Central and ride it six stops. After getting off the bus, cross the street and walk up the hill past the cemetery. Your site is on the left. Red line to Bennett, blue line to Ironwood, bus 80 to North Central, past the cemetery. Red line, blue line, bus 80. Red line, blue line, 80.

Navigating to my field site proved one of the earliest challenges of this student research project. I was new to the Boston area and unfamiliar with both the many

neighborhoods of Boston and the Massachusetts transportation system. To my relief, I seemed to have mastered the route within a few trips. Before I began traveling to Fanmi Nou, however, I had to narrow down my research topic and questions. Then, I needed to locate a community that I wanted to collaborate with, and one that wanted to collaborate with me. I was unsure what the process of finding a field site that would take on a graduate student intern doubling as a researcher would look like. To narrow down potential sites, I focused my search on organizations that served children. I knew that my past extensive experience working with children might add to the argument that my thesis project should focus on children. I did not, however, want to limit my project's scope by insisting I work with children, especially because I knew getting a human subjects research study with child participants approved might prove more difficult than one with adults. I also felt some slight internal tension focusing my research on children, as I was aware of the stereotype of women specializing in work with children.

When researching the specialty areas of faculty in my graduate program while applying for this program, I became increasingly interested in working with immigrant populations. Growing up in rural Wisconsin, I was excited about the opportunities a city like Boston presented for working with immigrant populations. It turned out, conveniently, that my research advisor had several strong ties to different immigrant populations and immigrant resource centers in the area. With his help, I gained contacts with individuals in different communities and discussed whether a collaboration for my student thesis was possible. After meeting with representatives from several Boston area sites, I decided pursuing a project that focused on children was something I was

passionate about. I visited sites that would allow me to merge these two interests of working with children and working with immigrants, finally deciding on the multi-service nonprofit for recent immigrants that is Fanmi Nou.

In October 2019, I began my role as an intern at Fanmi Nou. I floated from classroom to classroom, assisting teachers and providing individual and small group homework support to students of a variety of ages. Throughout the next several months, one of my primary tasks became serving as a chess opponent (almost always the losing partner) to students interested in the game as an extracurricular. I also performed small administrative duties, such as helping Fanmi Nou organizers compile presenter biographies for an event they hosted. By March 2020, Fanmi Nou transitioned its programming online, and I tutored students virtually throughout the summer.

Research Design

This project takes a phenomenological approach to data collection by describing the lived experiences of immigrant families and staff members that work with these families; as well as the embodied experience of being an immigrant in Boston. Phenomenology, at its core, "is an attempt to describe the basic structures of human experience and understanding from a first-person point of view" (Carman 2011, viii). Phenomenology is an inherently descriptive approach. In my study, I attempted to invoke Clifford Geertz, an anthropologist that applied phenomenological thinking to his work, and engaged in thick description. I not only described observable phenomena, but added context, interpretations, and my reflexivity to the accounts. I recorded, in detail, my

sensory experiences while observing interactions. According to Geertz (1973) ethnography *is* thick description. A central tenet of phenomenology is the attempt to describe the essence of a shared common experience. This project serves as an attempt to describe the shared experiences of those staff members, caregivers, and children that took part in observation and interviews.

Though this study is not community based participatory research (CBPR), I have drawn on CBPR by incorporating input from members of the community of study to help guide my research decisions. For example, my central research questions emerged out of a conversation I had with Fanmi Nou's director. The director, whom I will refer to as Dr. Marie-Jeanne (named after Marie-Jeanne Lamartiniére, a heroic woman who fought in the Haitian Revolution), recounted a time where a Haitian immigrant mother came to her in tears, her young child in tow. The parent worried she may need to set up accommodations for her child if officials deported her. After some probing, Dr. Marie-Jeanne revealed where this parent's concerns came from: the child had overheard someone say ICE (Immigration and Customs Enforcement) could come and take him away from his family. Upon relaying this message to his mother, the child would have observed a distressed parent, upset about the prospect of losing her son. What does this observation of parental distress signal to the child? How does a child make sense of something that directly affects them, but that they may not yet fully understand? Are, and if so, how are these perceptions exacerbated in a time characterized by such overt hostility towards immigrants? How does an organization for immigrant families help in this type of situation? To further include input from members of the community, I

concluded each interview by asking participants what they believed was important for me to know in addition to the questions I had asked them.

This research project takes a version of a strengths-based perspective by acknowledging what immigrant families are already doing to cope with immigration-related distress. Hammond and Zimmerman (2012) argue that conceptualizing people as "having a problem" may place undue responsibility on individuals. Externalizing the problem, as a strengths-based perspective does, removes the responsibility of the problem from an individual's jurisdiction and places it on the contextual, structural factors that are often more to blame (Hammond and Zimmerman 2012). Though a strengths-based perspective focuses on the capabilities and strengths individuals and communities already possess, it does not suggest the absence of problems. Besides a phenomenological, CBPR-like, and strengths-based approach, this study may take on a similar form to what Pink and Morgan (2013) describe as short-term ethnography. Though "not only (or even dominantly) characterized by its temporal nature," short-term ethnography can gain in-depth forms of knowledge that may apply to faster, informed interventions (359). The intensity of data collection characterizes this study as a type of short-term ethnography. The semi-structured interviews, informal conversations, and robust descriptive notes taken during observation in my study help make up the intense data collection prevalent in short-term ethnographies.

Research Methods

Even before I began hearing news stories and concerns voiced by family, friends, and colleagues about the potential surfacing of a novel virus in the U.S., I fully expected my research methodology to change from what I initially planned. Research advisors, program faculty, students that had been through the program, and graduate students in other programs warned me this would be the case. As in-person research restrictions because of the COVID-19 pandemic began rolling out mid- and late March, I made sweeping changes to my protocol, adjusting my research plan to accommodate a range of data collection outcomes. I ended up submitting a research application that laid out two distinct study procedures and recruitment sections: one for in-person research and one a COVID-19 contingency plan, which would entail an entirely remote protocol. I submitted, edited, and resubmitted this research application to Boston University School of Medicine's (BUSM) institutional review board (IRB) for an approved exempt determination before engaging in any research activities with human participants. My study's procedures did not require a full board review.

To prepare for submitting my research application, I had lengthy conversations with the Medical Anthropology and Cross-Cultural Practice program's methods instructor, my research advisors, and members of my cohort. After submitting my initial proposal at the end of March 2020, I had multiple additional conversations with the IRB analyst assigned to my project and my methods instructor. Approval of my application was contingent upon addressing the stipulations the IRB analyst laid out to protect the participants that engaged with my research. To confirm data privacy, I connected with a

BUSM Information Technology staff member to encrypt and update my personal computer. I made minor adjustments to my protocol, contested others that would prevent me from answering my research questions, and ultimately produced a research application the IRB determined exempt.

While preparing my research application, I knew my study would be under extra scrutiny because of the nature of my research questions and the identity of the population I was hoping to engage. The realm of health research commonly refers to individuals from marginalized identity groups (e.g. immigrants, people of color, children) as "vulnerable" populations. In her discussion of ethics in qualitative research, Fisher (2012) explores the concept of vulnerability as it relates to citizenship and human rights. Often in research, vulnerable populations are deemed unable to provide informed consent on the basis of protection. Fisher dissects how the tendency to emphasize a research participant's ability to provide informed consent is frequently tied to their assumed status as socially deficient. This prioritization of whether research participants can consent may overshadow discussions about the representation of "vulnerable" populations in qualitative research, potentially infringing upon the representation rights of these populations. At what point are protections so binding that they become exclusionary? What are the effects of this on whom research represents? Is exclusion from participation protecting people, or is it just easier than designing studies and procedures better? I believe this label of vulnerability is partially responsible for the gap in research on children's perspectives, which this study aims to help fill. I have actively worked this theoretical discussion into my research design by familiarizing myself with qualitative

research ethical frameworks and continuing to pursue research with this colloquially "vulnerable" population.

Collaborators

My study population came solely from Fanmi Nou. I wanted to focus the most heavily on children's perceptions and supplement these perceptions with data from their parents and staff members at Fanmi Nou. Because children learn from the attitudes and behaviors of the adults in their lives (Kohrt, Mendenhall, and Yarris 2016; Lehrner and Yehuda 2018), I thought it was important to include these additional viewpoints. Adult and child perspectives may have a bidirectional impact on one another, and including two sub-samples that interact with this study's children of focus helps contextualize their perspectives. I am particularly interested in the role Fanmi Nou plays for families, which I might understand differently from the perspectives of caregivers and staff members than from children.

Because of my tripartite sample, the eligibility criteria for this study differed depending on the subsample. For the children I wanted to interview and observe, the inclusion criteria were that they spoke English, were under 18 years of age, had a caregiver or other family member that was a Haitian immigrant, and attended Fanmi Nou's after-school and/or summer program. The caregiver subsample required that participants were over the age of 18, spoke English, and were a caregiver of a child in Fanmi Nou's after-school and/or summer program. Finally, the staff member subsample

required that participants were over the age of 18 and were a current staff member at Fanmi Nou that interacted with the children in its programming in some capacity.

Sampling

I used a quota sampling strategy to fill a specific number of cases for each subsample of the study population. Specifically, I recruited and interviewed seven staff members, three caregivers and one child. With this quota sampling strategy, I originally planned to recruit ten children, five caregivers, and five staff members, favoring interviews with children because of this study's emphasis on children's perceptions. I hoped to interview more children, but this subsample of the population proved most difficult for scheduling interviews. Part of this difficulty was because of the online nature of recruitment under COVID-19 in-person research restrictions; I had less in-person contact with the children I was hoping to interview than I would have if I did not complete my internship remotely. Another part of this difficulty resulted from first needing to obtain parental consent before talking to children about research participation. Several of the parents I interviewed expressed interest in allowing their children to take part, but they had busy schedules. The nature of working and balancing online schooling for their children at home during a pandemic was not conducive to parents having extra time to assist their children in participating in a study, especially when parents already sacrificed their time when taking part in interviews themselves.

Though I did not fill the exact subsample quota I expected, I used this quota sampling strategy purposively to ensure that certain types of individuals (i.e. parents,

caregivers, and children that fit my inclusion criteria) in the study's sample universe ended up in the final sample. I used snowball sampling in the caregiver subsample to help in recruiting parent participants' children for interviews. After interviewing parents, I mentioned I was also seeking to interview children and inquired if they thought their children would be interested in speaking with me. Given the specific nature of the research questions, the limited number of informants at my internship site, and that I used qualitative medical anthropological methods, this sample size was adequate to address the desired topics. However, given that I completed a single interview with a child, the questions I could ultimately answer with my data changed. I relied much more heavily on participant observation data of children, and took into account parent and staff descriptions of interactions with children.

Recruitment

I recruited participants for virtual interviews through my ongoing internship with Fanmi Nou. I connected with Dr. Marie-Jeanne to ask if she could send my recruitment email scripts to families and staff members through their email address. She delegated to another staff member, whom I sent my recruitment scripts. This staff member emailed by script to both the staff listserv and the parent listserv. I indicated a need for both adult and child participants in the caregiver script. These initial emails contained a summary of the research study, an invitation to take part in the interview, or allow a child to, and my contact information. I included an option to contact me to opt out of the observation component of the study in the staff email script, but this statement was not relevant for

the caregiver script because COVID-19 in person research restrictions prevented me from observing parent and child interactions. Upon waiting three weeks after the designated staff member distributed my preliminary informational recruitment emails, I followed up individually by email with staff members to inquire about interest in participating in an interview. I did not follow up with any caregivers through my personal email, but the staff member who sent out the initial emails checked in with caregivers at the end of July to gauge interest and put me into contact with those caregivers who responded. I also made an announcement at a virtual staff meeting held over Zoom (a video teleconferencing software), after a brief introduction from Dr. Marie-Jeanne, to remind staff of my study and invite them to participate. To help in recruiting children and gaining parent permission, at the end of interviews with caregivers, I asked if these parents thought their children would be interested in speaking with me.

Conducting all research activities remotely for all subjects meant I engaged in a virtual consent process with my collaborators. BUSM's IRB approved me to gain verbal consent from adults that I would interview, verbal parental permission for child participation, and verbal assent from children that I would interview. Upon scheduling remote interviews, I emailed participants the research information sheet/consent document as an attachment to review before the actual interview. When the time of the Zoom interview came, I shared my computer screen on Zoom so that participants could follow along as I read the information sheet aloud and got verbal consent from adult participants (i.e. caregivers and staff members) before asking the interview questions. Before interviewing the one child that agreed to speak with me, I emailed their parents a

research information sheet to review. I received parental permission for child participation in the interview by explaining the study and reading the parental permission form aloud on Zoom. At the beginning of this interview, I also read aloud the child assent document while sharing it on Zoom.

Data Collection

My approach to data collection was multifaceted. I engaged in participant observation of everyday interactions between children and adults at Fanmi Nou, and of events, such as staff meetings and community gatherings. I conducted qualitative, open-ended audio-recorded interviews with staff members, caregivers, and one child. Within these interviews, I planned to rely partially on visual-based methods by asking one subset of my sample population, children, to draw pictures via the Zoom whiteboard function as a part of their interview. Because I only interviewed one older child, I did not end up employing this visual-based method. Besides these human interactions, I conducted non-human subjects data collection in the form of content analyses, specifically artifact and document analysis, on organizational emails, flyers, texts, websites related to my site, and podcasts related to my site.

Participant Observation

Participant observation is a widely accepted and valued method in qualitative research, and specifically ethnography (Creswell and Creswell 2018). Participant observation may provide data difficult to obtain in interviews alone; it is one thing to say

you behave or feel a certain way, but it is another thing to exhibit behavior that confirms this. The act of participant observation can take on a variety of forms, some more participation-heavy and others more observation-heavy. In their book on research design in qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches, Creswell and Creswell define four categories of observer: complete participant, observer as participant, participant as observer, and complete observer. My level of observation was typically the second and third type; I never concealed my role as a researcher, but I also took part in many of the activities I was observing as part of my intern role at Fanmi Nou. I began engaging in informal participant observation as soon as I had decided upon and visited a field site for an internship in October 2019. I recorded in-depth, descriptive field notes about my observations, often taking down shorter notes in the moment in a small field journal, and elaborating on these notes with details and context I remembered when I had a free moment.

To protect privacy and confidentiality, I did not record any names or other personally identifying information in the observation field notes and refrained from writing locations or names of schools. My initial research plan slated this participant observation to continue into the summer, wherein I planned to visit Fanmi Nou regularly to observe and record field notes. I intended to continue observing child to child, child to caregiver, and child to staff interactions at Fanmi Nou's summer program, staff meetings, and Fanmi Nou-hosted community events. I was already aware of a few of these in-person community events planned for the summer when I submitted my research application in March. To make children, caregivers, staff, and community members

aware of my presence as an observer, I prepared to send email notifications and announcements. Something I did in the past, and would have continued to do throughout summer participant observation, was to take notes in my field notebook to provide a visual cue, or reminder, for people they were being observed by a researcher.

Participant observation under the COVID-19 contingency plan portion of my IRB application—which was ultimately what I had to adhere to throughout the summer—looked a little different. My IRB application laid out a protocol for an entirely virtual participant observation component of staff member and community member interactions during staff meetings and site-hosted community events conducted via Zoom or other teleconferencing software. As a part of my internship and volunteer duties at Fanmi Nou, I assisted students with their academic work (often in the subjects of mathematics and reading) on Zoom. Because I was primarily working one-on-one with students, and a virtual summer meant there were no pickups and drop offs by caregivers at a physical location, the child-to-child and child-to-parent interaction observation component of this study only applied to in-person research. I did not conduct participant observation of these types of interactions during summer data collection. I did, however, observe interactions between children and staff members on Zoom. Staff members would greet children before assigning them to a virtual breakout room with me as a volunteer. Besides these Zoom tutoring sessions between myself and students, I conducted my other field site visits via Zoom at staff meetings Fanmi Nou approved me to attend. These staff meetings, and whenever I was not actively tutoring a student, were moments in which I would record participant observation field notes in my field journal.

Spanning the months of October 2019 to August 2020, I engaged in about 160 hours of internship and observation time at Fanmi Nou, most of that time spent in person, but many virtual hours. I was not constantly taking field notes during these hours, however. I also spent a significant amount of the time taking part as an intern or volunteer, which contributed to my tacit knowledge of Fanmi Nou, and helped inform the questions I asked during interviews. As Fanmi Nou claimed several spaces, and moved their programming during my fieldwork, my observation occurred in a variety of settings. These environments included a warehouse-like room separated by transportable cubicle walls and connected to a local church, a parking lot that doubled as a basketball court/soccer field/tag arena, the hallways, classrooms, and cafeteria of a middle school, and a good deal of virtual Zoom meeting rooms.

Interviews

Along with participant observation, semi-structured, open-ended interviews are another common method in qualitative research (Creswell and Creswell 2018). During these interviews, I could ask questions that directly contributed to answering my study's primary research questions. Beginning in early August 2020, I interviewed staff members at Fanmi Nou, caregivers or parents who used Fanmi Nou's services, and one child in Fanmi Nou's programming. I began each interview by reviewing a research information sheet tailored to the specific participant (staff member, caregiver, or child), asking if the participant had questions, and gaining verbal consent or assent for audio recording. I

conducted all the interviews over Zoom. The vast majority were video calls, but two were audio calls.

I created a distinct set of questions for each of my samples and even stratified the child sample to children under ten years of age and children ten years of age and older when creating the interview guides. For the staff member interviews, I asked questions about informants' role at Fanmi Nou and in the lives of the children Fanmi Nou serves. I asked staff members to tell me about the children they see at Fanmi Nou and how they interact with one another. I asked about the families Fanmi Nou serves more broadly and about anything they would describe as unique about working with immigrant families and children. Towards the end of the interview, I asked specifically about how staff members believe a child's family migration history affects the children. I wondered if they observed any of this playing out at the after-school program. For the caregiver sample, I geared my questions more towards asking about their families. I asked caregivers to tell me about family members who immigrated from Haiti and if they had any family members still living in Haiti. I inquired about their children and if they ever spoke to their children about Haiti or their family's migration experience. Similar to the staff member sample, I asked if and how these parents believed their experience of being an immigrant or living in an immigrant family in the U.S. affects their children. I also asked caregivers about their experiences with Fanmi Nou.

When planning for interviewing children under ten years of age, my protocol relied heavily on visual based methods, specifically drawing prompts. Zoom software has an option where participants can share a virtual whiteboard, allowing each participant to

annotate, or draw, on the whiteboard using a variety of colors. For most of the interview questions, I planned to ask informants to draw a picture of a certain scenario. For example, I intended to ask informants to draw a picture of themselves at Fanmi Nou, and then ask them to elaborate on what they drew. Past literature (Barton, 2015; Berson et al., 2019; Guillemin & Drew, 2010; Spratling et al., 2012) has documented the utility of engaging in visual based data collection methods with populations such as young children, or when asking about certain topics that may be difficult to talk about.

Other topics included in the interviews I hoped to conduct with children under ten were about a child's home, family, and experiences at Fanmi Nou. I also planned to ask these child participants if family members ever talked to them about Haiti, and how these conversations about Haiti made them feel. For children over ten years of age, and for adult participants, drawing prompts may also be useful. I interviewed one child over the age of ten and asked similar questions to those previewed above, however I intentionally let this child know that drawing a picture to assist their verbal answers might be helpful, but that they did not need to do so. I wanted to avoid a situation wherein an older child thought I was being condescending for asking them to draw instead of giving verbal answers.

Non-Human Subjects Data Collection

Besides participant observation and semi-structured interviews, another form of data collection I performed was non-human subjects data collection. I collected, analyzed, and coded multiple forms of material and media culture related to my site and

to my research questions, including three websites; a graphic delineating information about the Public Charge Rule; a flyer about a site-hosted symposium; a flyer about a community forum on current immigration policies and TPS (temporary protected status); a site-produced graphic about Fanmi Nou's response to COVID-19; multiple podcasts about the Haitian revolution and other significant moments in Haiti's history; and three physical, scanned documents collected at events hosted by Fanmi Nou. The first was a promotional flyer for a book on Haiti and human rights by a Haitian author, the second a document promoting the passing of certain immigration legislation (the Safe Communities Act), and the third a flyer making people aware of the annual symposium Fanmi Nou holds for its children and parents.

Over the course of the summer, I kept a research journal that I used to document significant research-related experiences, reflect on interviews and participant observations, connect themes in the literature to my research project, and speculate about early patterns emerging in the data I collected. The notes and observations in this research journal differed from those I took as a part of participant observation because I did not record them at my field site and did not document participant behavior and language. I also used this research journal to record my impressions and feelings about both research-related and personal events that ultimately affected my research. The spring and summer of 2020 were time periods marked by major events (the protests spurred by police brutality and racial injustice and the COVID-19 pandemic, to name a few) and this research journal was a space where I could both connect my feelings about them to, and distinguish my feelings about them from, my research.

The COVID-19 Pandemic

Initially, I regarded COVID-19 as a barrier to my intended research plan; it was an inconvenient obstacle that forced me to change my protocol. In fact, because of in-person research restrictions beginning late March, I conducted a large proportion of my data collection completely remotely through the video conferencing software, Zoom. One of my informants, however, framed the pandemic in a way that I believe is a more productive way of thinking about it. They posited that "COVID-19 helped us understand the greatest needs of our community," so they could gear efforts towards addressing these needs. COVID-19 illuminated inequities that were already there; it made social inequities starkly visible to many who may have not seen them before. Besides illuminating inequities, the very research restrictions I was originally so worried about may have provided some benefit to the type and quality of information I received.

To be sure, COVID-19 and the restrictions it placed on in-person research activities complicated my research process. For example, conducting all of my interviews via Zoom made it difficult to contextualize transcripts of the interviews as I was reviewing and analyzing them. In their article, *Problematizing Transcription: Purpose, Paradigm and Quality*, Lapadat (2000) writes about the importance of contextualizing transcripts, as one cannot strip context away from them. Initially, when I realized I could conduct most, if not all, of my interviews using video or phone conferencing software, I thought this would simplify the inclusion of context in transcripts. It would control the context and I would simply contextualize my transcripts by noting I held them over

Zoom; Zoom would be the context. After conducting just a few interviews, however, I realized it felt more difficult to contextualize transcripts of video interviews because I could not fully realize my participants' context as it differed from mine. Many occasions existed wherein an invisible provocation occurred, and I could merely observe my participants' reaction to it. "What if my participant becomes visibly distracted or annoyed, and I misattribute this reaction to my interview questions or the length of time the interview is taking, instead of to the invisible provocation?" I worried. After conducting more interviews, I realized I could not accurately contextualize the interview as my participant experiences it, but that I could not do this even if the interviews were in person. I can never fully understand or experience the world as another person experiences it, but I can contextualize by noting my own observations to the best of my ability.

With my imaginings of these types of difficulties of interviewing virtually and many more in mind, the thought I would have to use Zoom for the entirety of my thesis research interviews intimidated me. I was looking forward to meeting with my participants and connecting in person, which I imagined would help establish a sense of trust before I began asking them personal questions. After conducting several virtual interviews, however, I felt much more confident that Zoom could help make my research life easier in unanticipated ways. To start, the transcribe function on Zoom allowed me to have a basic transcription to go through and correct, rather than hand transcribing each interview. It was also very helpful to record directly on Zoom without having to buy a separate recording device, or worry about the safety/privacy of using a separate recording

software. When reviewing the consent documents and research information sheets before asking participants questions, Zoom allowed me to share my screen with my informant, highlighting specific parts or moving my cursor over sections as I discussed them. I could be confident my participants viewed the exact consent document I was referencing before choosing to take part. The screen sharing function also allowed informants to use the whiteboard function within Zoom, and draw on a blank screen that the informant and I shared, allowing me to view their drawing in real time. Though no participants chose to draw, if they did, I could have saved these drawings as image files to incorporate into my data analysis and interview coding, and to share back with participants if they wished.

Apart from the logistical and more technical ways Zoom assisted me in my research endeavors, I believe it may have helped both some of my informants, and myself, to be more comfortable in the interview interaction. We conducted the interview from our respective homes, places that one typically regards as safe and comfortable. Perhaps participants felt freer to discuss the topics I was asking about when they were more certain of their environment. I spoke to staff members I rarely saw at my site when we were in person, so moving online may have broadened my informant pool.

Zoom became a de facto research site. In their book, *An Imagined Geography: Sierra Leonean Muslims in America*, D'Alisera (2004) writes about her realizations when transforming the familiar into the foreign and the location of "the field." Specifically, she discusses how, in her work, the telephone became a field site. As the pandemic took full effect in the U.S., my field site changed from a middle school cafeteria to my laptop, and specifically Zoom. I hope not to conceptualize Zoom as merely an alternative, but lesser,

form of communication with my informants, and instead view it as an entirely distinct field site from that in which I would occupy if COVID-19 restrictions were not in place.

Data Analysis

Collected data for analysis included interview transcripts, participant rendered drawings from interviews, materials produced by Fanmi Nou or partner organizations (e.g. flyers for events and informational emails sent out to staff members and families), website content analyses, and observational field notes. I adapted all material to an online format through processes such as interview transcription or scanning of paper materials. For this project, I applied several types of analysis strategies to my data. Content analysis forced me to categorize both verbal and behavioral data, which I then typed and easily stored. Thematic analysis allowed me to notice repeated ideas, topics, or patterns that emerged in the data, while narrative analysis assisted me in taking the stories my participants told me and adding context and the observed experiences of my informants as added layers. Using inductive analysis meant that I did not begin this project with a specific hypothesis in mind that I intended to test through my observations and interviews. Instead, I came into this project with some research questions, but ultimately attempted to make broader generalizations based on a few specific, more in-depth cases and observations.

To engage in these strategies of analysis, I relied heavily on NVivo, a qualitative data analysis software, to organize and code my data. NVivo allows users to work with a variety of different data (e.g. interview transcripts from Microsoft Word, scanned image

files, PDFs, audio files, video files). With each round of coding of a new piece of data, I identified novel emerging themes. Thus, I revisited earlier transcripts, website analyses, etc. and re-coded them considering the new codes and themes I identified. After creating a codebook wherein I listed, defined, and provided an example of each code, I recategorized and regrouped these codes based upon how I was coding new data. The codebook accommodated "parent" and "child" codes, in which one code may have several more specific subcodes. For example, the parent code "power dynamics" included several child codes showing dynamics of power between specific groups: "between children" and "between children and adults." This process of coding, categorizing, coding, and recategorizing enabled me to consider each piece of datum in light of the other data I collected as time went on.

Study Limitations

There are several limitations of my study that result from its design. First, as with all qualitative research, its qualitative nature and relatively low number of participants limits its statistical generalizability. Statistical generalizability is not the goal of this project, however, as I aim to portray an accurate, robust depiction of the lived experiences of my informants. My research is not necessarily generalizable to other immigrant communities because I am sampling solely from a single multi-resource center. The COVID-19 pandemic required all of my semi-formal interviewing to be virtual, which potentially limited who I could speak with. I conducted the recruitment process for this study's interviews completely through email and text, which further

limited the representativeness of my sample. Fanmi Nou staff members, caregivers, and children without a computer and internet, or those who do not use email or text were not represented in my study.

More broadly, this study is limited because I sampled only from families who have a relationship with Fanmi Nou's after-school or summer program. Families who have children who take part in after-school or summer programs may be different in key ways than families whose children do not participate in these programs. Because I am exploring the role that Fanmi Nou plays in families' lives, I might only get the perspectives of families with a better relationship with the organization, who are thus more willing to take part in my study.

Another study limitation is that I do not speak Haitian Creole or French. Because of this, my inclusion criteria require that my participants speak English. People with lower levels of English proficiency may also have unique immigration experiences, and because of this sampling limitation, I will not capture those experiences in my sample.

A Note on Reflexivity and Positionality

Two students and I are sitting at a table after we have reviewed their homework from that school day. One student asks if we can all go outside to play basketball. The other student looks questioningly at me, and then at the student that asked to go play, as if to say, "Does she have the authority to take us outside?" I return the student's questioning look, unsure how to answer. I'm somewhat aware that students need an adult supervisor in order to go outside, but I don't know what Fanmi Nou's formal rule is, and I don't know if I count as an adult supervisor. "Um, why don't you go ask Miss Nadia," I say hesitantly. The students chuckle and leave to track down Nadia. They return a few moments later, and one student grabs my hand. "She says you can take us! Let's go play basketball." (Fieldnotes, October 18th, 2019)

It is important for me to reflect (here and always) on my identity and the space that I occupy while conducting research. My role at Fanmi Nou was ambiguous. I was neither a true staff member, nor solely a volunteer. As exemplified in these fieldnotes, I was often uncertain about how much authority I had, and students undoubtedly picked up on this hesitancy. I attempted to navigate the in-between role of adult/authority figure and friend/playmate, sometimes well, but sometimes awkwardly. The children I worked with seemed to have a better grasp on the precarity of my role than I did.

Reflecting further, I recognize that as a white graduate student, born in the U.S. to U.S.-born parents and grandparents, I occupy a position of privilege. I recognize the history of white exploitation of Black immigrant populations "justified" under the guise of research. Though I am continually becoming more knowledgeable about Haitian, Haitian American, and Haitian Bostonian history, I lack the cultural background knowledge that many of my informants possess about their Haitian identities. I also lack the ability to speak some primary languages that many of my potential informants speak, such as Haitian Creole, French, and Spanish.

As a tutor, I occupied a position of power over the students that I worked with. Though I believe my etic (outsider) position was helpful for eliciting more robust explanations from collaborators who rightly assumed I needed certain things explained in greater depth, it also may have made them less comfortable in the research encounter. This positionality and perceived identity may have affected how individuals interacted with me. In this project, I strove to be aware of the potential power differentials my position and identity inflict on my research interactions. To mitigate these issues, I

engaged in active reflexivity, and examined how my own beliefs, background, and biases impacted my research. I acknowledge that a young white woman from rural Wisconsin may not be the best arbiter of knowledge about Haitian immigrant families, but I also recognize the power of a platform. I hope to not obscure this thesis's subjectivities, with the goal of igniting dialogue about the experiences of Haitian immigrant families and children in the contemporary era.

CHAPTER FOUR: Facilitating Choice

In this chapter I argue that Fanmi Nou facilitates the process of picking and choosing which aspects of American life to embrace and which to refuse for the children and families that use its services. By providing people the tools to choose which pieces of life in the U.S. to engage with, Fanmi Nou is also cultivating a sense of agency, enabling those who use its services to make informed decisions about their lives. Researchers Welzel and Inglehart (2010) link feelings of agency to human wellbeing through several pathways. First, "in response to widening opportunities of life, people place stronger emphasis on emancipative values" (43). As a response to this heightened emphasis on freedom of choice, agency is given more weight in affecting life satisfaction, and thus wellbeing.

To facilitate these decisions, the immigrant services organization must interact with larger structures and systems, often in seemingly contradictory ways. I will discuss how Fanmi Nou strategically engages by being a *system-maintaining* and a *system-challenging* entity, but I note that this binary is just one way the organization engages with systems. It helps us comprehend some of Fanmi Nou's engagement, but does not fully account for the more complex ways in which the organization functions. I will also review several qualities the organization uses to facilitate children's and families' choices, and how the COVID-19 pandemic forced the organization and its constituents to engage with an altered system. In this chapter, I place children at the after-school program within a network of multiple relationships, and consider how these relationships

affect children's choice of aspects of American life (i.e. culture, values, norms, and practices) to adopt and reject.

Strategic Engagement with U.S. Systems

Psychologist Urie Bronfenbrenner (2005) uses an ecological systems framework to describe how individuals are related to communities and broader society. In Bronfenbrenner's model, individuals exist at the center of several concentric rings. Each ring denotes a more macro-level system the further away it is from the individual. At the level of institutions, both local and federal level, Bronfenbrenner's (2005) framework helps us visualize the types of layered systems with which Fanmi Nou interacts, and within which individuals are enmeshed.

As a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization operating in the U.S., Fanmi Nou must interact with the current political, economic, and social systems that govern everyday life to secure services for their client families. Some of the reasons that make writing about interactions with "systems" complicated and difficult, also make them complicated and difficult to navigate as an immigrant. Thus, within this broad swath of systems that the organization encounters, I am concentrating on two: the local level education system in Boston and federal immigration policies. Fanmi Nou is intimately familiar with the Boston Public School system (BPS). The after-school and summer programs assist students with homework they receive from their various public or private school teachers. The programs also help prepare students for semesters in these school systems. Besides the education system, Fanmi Nou has a relationship with the political and legal sectors as

they relate to immigrant rights and policies. Fanmi Nou has established relationships with key stakeholders in this realm, such as policymakers, community leaders, and immigration rights attorneys.

System-Maintaining and System-Challenging Praxis

To help characterize the interactions between Fanmi Nou and U.S. systems, Merrill Singer's (1995) distinction between *system-maintaining* and *system-challenging* praxis is useful. In his essay, "Beyond the Ivory Tower: Critical Praxis in Medical Anthropology," Singer defines system-challenging praxis as a classification of work that "is concerned with unmasking the origins of social inequity" and seeks to "heighten rather than dissipate social action and to make permanent changes in the social alignment of power," (90). He contrasts this work to system-correcting praxis, which is minor and incremental in its changes, ultimately yielding no substantive realignment. Conversely, system-maintaining praxis strives to preserve existing power structures and dynamics. Though Singer's discussion of these different types of praxes specifically concerns how they play out in healthcare settings, I am extrapolating his concepts to a more general context. They assist me in framing the way Fanmi Nou, as an organization, relates to the United States.

I argue that Fanmi Nou is both influenced by larger institutional forces, and actively working to change that overarching structure. In the sense that *system-maintaining* entities reproduce dominant structural forces, part of the organization's mission is to get students to the same academic level as non-immigrant students.

According to their mission statement, Fanmi Nou helps integrate recent immigrants to the United States, both economically and socially. This system-maintaining praxis can take the form of Fanmi Nou integrating students into Boston schools, or helping immigrants navigate Boston-based legal and social systems. Fanmi Nou's academic programs supplement and solidify what students learn in their U.S.-based schools. The program also prepares students for placement tests to gain access to institutions like exam schools (selective public high schools that require certain grades and completion of an entrance examination) and colleges. The after-school, summer, and adult education programs prepare children and adults for school and work lives based in the United States. In this way, Fanmi Nou sustains a hegemonic U.S.-based education and labor force standard.

Though helping to sustain systems, Fanmi Nou is simultaneously a *system-challenging* institution. The organization devotes a substantial portion of its philosophy, time, and resources to civic engagement, particularly immigrant-rights advocacy. The organization and its members develop, sponsor, and attend events that strive to challenge existing unjust structures. For example, speakers at the community form I discuss in Chapter Two acted in a system-challenging way when they considered the issues of the Public Charge Rule and how its interpretation could be confusing. Another event I attended, a symposium, was an opportunity for both system-maintaining and system-challenging behavior: presenters instructed attendees how to function within the current legal system, but encouraged them to question the adequacy of this same system.

In early May 2020, I observed a virtual symposium named after one of the principal generals in the Haitian Revolution: Toussaint L'Ouverture. Site organizers

originally intended for the event to be an in-person symposium with many attendees, but because of COVID-19 gathering restrictions, Fanmi Nou held the event online via Zoom. The second annual symposium brought in around 60 attendees, several of whom spoke as representatives of certain sectors. The sectors included health, the press and media, immigration law, and education. Each speaker laid out the relevance of their sector during the COVID-19 pandemic, along with steps for how advocates could best address the needs of immigrant communities. Representatives encouraged attendees to fill out the 2020 census, so that Haitians could be more adequately accounted for and represented than they have been.

One particularly significant point in the Zoom conversation arose when a representative from the education sector spoke. Without going into too much detail, he noted that the immigration process is traumatic for young people. He argued that the immigrant community and its advocates cannot be too accommodating to the system, but need to challenge it respectfully. The representative did not outline a specific series of steps to follow, but stated it broadly, with room for the audience to imagine what challenging the system respectfully could mean. The representative proposed people should be critical about what they need and critical about how government workers and policy makers treated the Haitian community in Boston. The virtual symposium represented a microcosm of Fanmi Nou's engagement with U.S. systems. It featured representatives that informed community members about ways to integrate successfully into an American landscape, but also advocated for change. On a broader level, the organization functions in concurrent and sometimes contradictory ways in relation to the

systems with which it interacts. To function successfully in the U.S., it may have to both concede to and challenge the current systems in place.

Limits of Singer's Binary

Though these two types of praxes help us understand the nature of Fanmi Nou's engagement, the organization's interaction with systems is more nuanced than this binary between system-maintaining and -challenging praxis suggests. Fanmi Nou succeeds in its mission of providing assistance to recently arrived immigrant families, even given the constraints of the school and immigration systems. The education system is not the sole system the organization maintains, and the immigration policy system is not the sole one it challenges. Instead, Fanmi Nou simultaneously positions itself within both of these systems to advocate for its families and children. The education and immigration policy systems, themselves, interact with one another, which shapes the types of engagement Fanmi Nou can enact.

For example, Fanmi Nou may engage in what I have called system-maintaining behavior in relation to the public school system. They produce students that are equipped with the cultural and social capital necessary to become engaged citizens and critics of current U.S. systems, including the ones in which they were "produced." Is this, then, actually system-maintaining praxis, or just temporary system-maintaining behavior? It may be more useful to envision a broader strategic engagement than that of the binary of

Singer's praxes. To make claims and demands on these systems, Fanmi Nou has to operate in the current educational structure and policy environment.

Aid and Deservingness

To envision how Fanmi Nou strategically engages with U.S. systems in a more nuanced way, I pose the question, how are people trained to present themselves in the education and immigration systems in which they make demands and claims? The way one presents themself for purposes of strategic engagement with systems does not necessarily equate to who they are internally, or how they would choose to identify, but it demonstrates how someone employs a certain identity to claim rights and make demands. As in my discussion of the creation of trauma portfolios and trauma narratives to prove or verify the suffering of individuals in Erica James's (2004), "The Political Economy of 'Trauma' in Haiti in the Democratic Era of Insecurity," part of Fanmi Nou's engagement with U.S. systems includes adapting itself in order to secure its needs.

I see this type of strategic engagement, particularly with the immigration policy system, tied to my background discussion on the history of U.S. treatment of immigrants. Knowing that U.S. customs and immigration officials made asylum determinations based on the perceived identity of migrants as economic migrants versus political refugees, Haitian immigrants may have learned how to present themselves in order to gain access to the United States.

Bourdieu's (1977) theory of *habitus* helps to explain the ways actors at Fanmi Nou know how to present themselves and strategically engage with various systems.

Habitus can be described as the socializations one acquires in childhood and beyond that account for one's immediate adherence to certain tastes, aversions, etc., and which help to forge class solidarity (Bourdieu 1977). Habitus is the seemingly innate set of characteristics and dispositions that govern how one carries themself and functions in the world. As part of strategic engagement, Haitian immigrants may be forced to learn how to present themselves as deserving of aid. This can be internalized into a certain habitus. Fanmi Nou as a nonprofit organization also learns to present itself in specific ways to secure recognized and legitimated forms of capital for the families and students it serves.

Pierre Bourdieu's theory of capital recognizes that certain resources can give people advantages in specific ways over other people in a system of exchange. Capital confers power. Bourdieu discusses many types of capital, including social, cultural, and economic. Unsurprisingly, as Thomas Abel (2008) notes "...the resources needed to select or adopt specific health-relevant lifestyles emerge from the interplay between economic, social and cultural capital," (3). Thus, capital and power impact health. Though many theories of capital, particularly social capital, exist, Bourdieu's (1986) social capital refers to "the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to the possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition" (247). Networks of relationships with other people are at the heart of social capital theory. As a broad category of capital, cultural capital includes resources such as education, skills, values, and tastes. Economic capital refers to the material resources that are "immediately and directly convertible into money and may be

institutionalized in the form of property rights," (Bourdieu 1986, 242). These three forms of capital are often interdependent.

To adjust to a life of attending schools in Boston, Fanmi Nou places its students in a better position to accumulate Bourdieu's types of capital through education. A quality education provides students cultural capital. They become able to use certain knowledge and ideas. Cultural capital may help one gain social capital through associations and networks of people, including peers, teachers, coaches, and administrators. The combined effects of this social and cultural capital can allow a person entrance to positions where they earn money, and thus economic capital. In these ways, Bourdieu's types of capital are interwoven; one type may help secure another.

Fanmi Nou's relationship with its funders represents another example of its strategic engagement with systems, specifically its ability to construct itself as a legitimately suffering body, deserving of capital, care, and rights in a strategic and practical way. As a nonprofit organization, Fanmi Nou receives mostly private foundation funding. Other sources include government contracts, individual donors, and corporate sponsors. To provide support to immigrant families and to challenge the federal level immigration policy system, Fanmi Nou must continue receiving the assistance that they do from their various funding sources.

In her book, *Democratic Insecurities*: *Violence, Trauma, and Intervention in Haiti*, Erica James (2010) dedicates one chapter to discussing the different types of economies (grant, gift, commodity) that donors and recipients are a part of when

transferring funds. Grant economies often function in an audit culture, where recipient individuals and organizations must prove their deservingness. As James notes:

> Although the transfer of resources is one way, there is an expectation that certain outcomes or "deliverables" will be achieved. The fruits of gifts or grants of aid are frequently assessed by formal and informal audits. Therefore, the ability to demonstrate a continued demand for the services an institution supplies—as well as the efficiency, productivity, and quality of services—is intrinsic to ensuring the institution's, program's, or project's survival (156).

Because a large proportion of Fanmi Nou's funding comes from outside sources, it must, like the organizations James describes in her book, have something to show for the resources it receives. Fanmi Nou engages in this type of display through events like showcases, where students perform on musical instruments, for example. Students also create hand-written thank-you cards with drawings for funders to show the organization's gratitude. Funders possess the ability to govern people and organizations based on their nonprofit recipients being indebted to them. One characteristic that allows Fanmi Nou to prevail in the audit culture of the grant economy is its action-oriented nature.

Fanmi Nou as Action-Oriented

The tension between system-maintaining and system-challenging praxis relates to one way Fanmi Nou strategically engages with U.S. systems: through pragmatism. As with many community-run nonprofit organizations, this group can succeed in its objectives of successfully assisting new immigrant families by taking concrete actions. It focuses on the tangible. The organization experiences the push-and-pull of working within certain systems while attempting radical rethinking of other systems, often all at

the same time. Fanmi Nou's founder and director, Dr. Marie-Jeanne, mirrors the organization's action-oriented nature. A first-generation Haitian immigrant herself, the charismatic, fast talking, bright-eyed Dr. Marie-Jeanne is often a representative of the agency at larger community events. She reflects the nature of the organization. As I observed many staff meetings where she took a leadership role, I noticed this goal-driven quality. Dr. Marie-Jeanne attempted to keep all the staff meetings moving at a fast pace. Although the topics of these staff meetings are broad and could each warrant lengthy discussion, the director encouraged each staff member to give their update efficiently. She ushered the conversation along (with swift nods of her head or a brisk "mhm") without devaluing the contributions of others. Dr. Marie-Jeanne often instructed staff members that they have "two seconds" to share their piece. She modeled this efficiency by speaking fast, herself, and circling back to tangible steps that she foresaw being taken. She liked to ask staff members—or other types of meeting attendees—"what can we *actually* do, or what can we do right now?"

Fanmi Nou, as an agency, reflects this results-driven mindset. It makes up the structure of programming, the after-school program schedule, and the events that it plans and hosts. The organization's propensity to outline concrete actions its members can take is partially why it is so successful at serving the Haitian immigrant community.

The action-oriented nature of both Dr. Marie-Jeanne and Fanmi Nou fosters a sense of proactiveness in both its staff members and students. This goal-oriented approach is often regarded as a skill that the agency helps to cultivate. One staff member, Kervens, talked about gaining this skill. Kervens began working for Fanmi Nou four or

five years before our interview, initially in the capacity of a tutor. He eventually became a fifth grade math and English teacher at the program, and put the skills he learned from the organization this way:

> And as far as working as a staff member, it kind of-, it gives me an opportunity to grow. Like I said, I like they get me involved in everything. So it's like even if I don't want to be involved in something. I'm gonna find myself involved in something, and [Fanmi Nou] kind of like helps me to manage my time well. It helps you tap into untapped areas that I didn't know I was good at. Let's say presenting. They would be like you [name of interviewee], you're presenting this. I'm like, wait, what [interviewer and interviewee laugh]. They kind of like propel you to do more than what you're there for. So that's like a unique aspect because usually when you get a new job done, you're kind of stuck in that one same job role. As far as Fanmi Nou, they kind of expand like everywhere (07/02/2020).

Being a staff member at Fanmi Nou is an opportunity for growth, and a chance to develop skills. This action-heavy approach complements the field of education and child development well, as it is a realm influenced by emerging research and innovation. As another staff member, Ernst, noted, their responsibilities are constantly in flux. Working within an agency that complements an education system—both of which are learning how to better serve their students—staff members must adapt to new pressures and demands. Revisiting Bourdieu and his theory of capital, through this adaptation, Fanmi Nou staff members develop expertise, and thus capital.

In his role at Fanmi Nou, Ernst is geared towards growth and development, as he is both a curriculum developer and program organizer. In this staff member's view of the field of education as it relates to Fanmi Nou's programs, "it's evolving, because it's not stagnant and every day you need to look at research or you need to look at exactly how to implement a-, just halfway mark and to respond to the needs of students" (07/08/2020).

The pragmatic approach of the program is related to its ability to respond to both emerging research and its students' needs.

The action-oriented nature of the executive director, staff members, and Fanmi Nou, as a whole, encourage this same work ethic in the children in its programming. The after-school and summer program emphasizes education, holding its students to a certain level of academic rigor. This is not only prevalent in the way the programs operate, but individual staff members communicate this emphasis to children in more direct ways too. During interviews, many staff members spoke of one of their primary roles being to help children to excel academically. This emphasis on education extends beyond affecting just the individual child; it is a reflection on the broader Haitian American and immigrant community. During our interview, Ernst noted, "You know, I've been in education for a very long time and just me coming to Boston [from Haiti] at my very young age, when I was 14 and just graduated upper echelon in academia, and I feel having institutions, not just Fanmi Nou, but institutions like Fanmi Nou create a path of excellence for the community," (07/08/2020).

Staff members gave other indicators that assisting children in achieving a quality education has broader implications than this already important goal. "When you know that the person you're helping can be, you know, whoever in the future. So you will be proud of your work when you will contribute to the success of a child today because that child can be whoever in the country," (07/10/2020). Here, staff member Lucson ties an individual sense of pride to the impact they have on a child's potential and future. Lucson

is part of Fanmi Nou's administrative team and is one of the first faces students see when they enter the building.

Kervens spoke about how the organization and its staff members prove the progress they are making with their students to parents, donors, and a wider audience that views the agency's website and newsletters.

> They also have like showcases for everything. So as far as like the instruments we do we try to do a like a semester showcase for the parents, to kind of like show like their progress of, like, hey, this is what the kids are doing, we kind of like want to show it to you as like our work, like you bringing them here isn't really-, is not like a means to no end. It's like we're actually kind of progressing and helping them kind of like learn different instruments and learn different activities (07/02/2020).

This "showcasing" of achievements has an important practical purpose, linked to Fanmi Nou's action-oriented tendencies. Besides showcasing for donors and funders, parents may entrust their children to the organization's programming if they see the progress their children are making. This verification of progress may be key for Haitian immigrant parents who emphasize or share their values on academic achievement.

Pick and Choose What You Want from Your Country

One way Haitian immigrant families at Fanmi Nou strategically engage with U.S. systems is actively combating the negative effects of their environments. Recalling the proponents of theories discussed earlier (e.g. CMA, disabling worlds, individualization of responsibility for health), environments can disable, but Haitian immigrant families are not agentless. Just as Fanmi Nou strategically interacts with U.S. political, economic, and

social systems, families engage in an intentional bartering with aspects of the U.S. at a more individual level. As Lovely put it:

> It is true you're born in this country, but you don't have to take all of the bad things that come with the country. There are a lot of good things. I'm trying as an immigrant to implant, you know, the good thing that we have in this country, which is good education for the kids and helping the kids to go higher with education. That's my main goal as a Haitian immigrant parent (08/05/2020).

Without going into much detail about what these "bad things" that come with the country are, Lovely acknowledges that although the U.S. subjects her children to them, in some ways they can choose which pieces of the country to reject and which to accept. She chooses education as an aspect of the U.S. to embrace for her children, and simultaneously rejects negative aspects, which might be something like U.S.-based discrimination against immigrants of color, or stereotypes of American students being more reward-driven.

Doucet's 2011) qualitative, ethnographic study explored how Haitian immigrant parents in the Greater Boston area "negotiate the boundaries around home and school" (2705). Doucet's data suggests Haitian immigrant parents may deliberately encourage boundaries between the two spheres of home and school, perhaps to monitor, discourage, or quell "Americanization." Though not fully defining Americanization, Doucet found her informants equated schools with Americanization, and that specific attributes such as a lack of discipline at school (teachers not having enough control over their students) and early sex education were connected to perceptions of Americanization.

The study highlights the agency Haitian immigrant parents may bring in their decisions to keep home and school distinct. Like Lovely, these parents choose education

as the aspect of the U.S. to embrace, while attempting to prevent too much of the U.S. (e.g. values, cultural norms, behaviors) to enter the space of the home. While I am highlighting one parent's view and framing her engagement with U.S. systems as a choice, it is necessary to clarify that this freedom of choice is fraught with built-in limitations. Parents possess agency in deciding for their families, but structural factors also constrain this choice.

In the next chapter, "Identity Formation," I discuss ways in which staff members and other researchers have highlighted differences between Haitian-born (or immigrant children from other countries) and American-born children. For one, a staff member at Fanmi Nou described how they observe American-born children in the after-school program to have an instant gratification mindset, whereas they do not see this pattern in children who have recently migrated from Haiti. This discussion will give more context to the specific aspects of home and school, and Haiti and the U.S. that people accept and reject.

Fanmi Nou as All-Encompassing

Though a strong emphasis on education is present in staff members, parents, and Fanmi Nou as a whole, it is far from the only aspect that staff members and parents believe the agency addresses. In fact, informants used multiple terms to describe the all-encompassing nature of the organization, such as it being "the center" or "a one stop shop." The organization provides adult education courses, financial assistance, and immigrant rights advocacy information to the families that rely on its services. Fanmi

Nou functions as a referral service, disseminating information to help immigrant families navigate to other resources, such as searching for jobs, getting set up at a place of worship, and signing children up for school. Nadia, the organization's after-school coordinator who worked at the program in various positions for five or six years, spoke of the holistic role the group takes in assisting immigrant families: "And for the family as well. We're financially supporting families. We're a resource for them, um for legal support or civic or anything else, really. So it's kind of like a whole support for the whole family, you know" (07/03/2020). Despite its efforts at being an all-encompassing resource center, like other organizations and nonprofits, the COVID-19 pandemic threatened Fanmi Nou's ability to help families.

Engaging with Altered Systems

Before the spring of 2020, Fanmi Nou's programming relied heavily on in-person interactions. The after-school program, student enrichment activities, and adult education program are all aspects of the services the organization offers that thrived in a face-to-face environment. In-person gathering restrictions began while I was conducting volunteer work with the organization. I wondered, how could Fanmi Nou engage with a U.S. system that has so drastically changed? Of the many severe ramifications individuals dealt with when faced with the threat of infection and an inability to work or go to school, the pandemic hit immigrant communities of color particularly hard. It brought stark inequities to light alarmingly quickly. Staff members that had developed expertise tutoring children, communicating with adults about jobs in the Boston area, and generally

supporting recently arrived families through face-to-face interactions found themselves, like most of us, in an era of the unknown. Though the education, economic, and social systems Fanmi Nou's staff members were more accustomed to navigating shifted because of COVID-19, staff members adapted their programming to accommodate a remote learning environment.

Though surging infection rates forced many service organizations and nonprofits to implement a transition to an online environment, Fanmi Nou did so particularly quickly. By mid-March, the group had sent information to families about beginning a virtual academy where students could continue to work with their teachers and volunteers online. The agency quickly got its members up to speed with Zoom, preventing a lapse in assistance to its families. When talking to staff members, many referenced the work their organization has engaged in, allowing it to continue to provide resources to families during the pandemic. Much of our discussions compared in person to online interactions with students. Nadia reflected briefly on the services Fanmi Nou provided during the pandemic:

> You know we-, like for these past few months, again, we have laptops that we've been giving out to families who needed it so they could continue working with us. Again with the COVID-19, you know people have become unemployed and we've actually been fundraising so we can support them. So it's like we're getting out of our way to just kind of make sure our community and our people are well taken care of. Which is what-, something I love about Fanmi Nou (07/03/2020).

Besides providing material resources such as laptops, iPads, and monetary support, Fanmi Nou adapted its programming to the unfamiliar landscape of COVID-19 by offering mental health services. Ernst described how he came together with Dr. Marie-

Jeanne and several physicians to pilot a new initiative in providing mental health support to members of the Haitian community.

> I've just connected with a couple of friends who study psychology, social networks and social workers, and other people in the field of mental health. We just organized and called people on the radio or televisions, or even through Zoom, and we have meetings. And listening to these people's concerns, and that's-, it breaks your heart for those of us who are not on the front line. So I think what this does-, not only do people have this sacred place, a safe place where they can share ideas and also information for people who have other issues if they feel that their mental is not that great. We get them connected with psychologists (07/08/2020).

In addition to this mental health collaboration initiative, the organization provided more informal mental health help, such as the occasional call to parents, and check-ins with students before they began virtual tutoring sessions. Acts such as these are precisely why staff members and those who rely on its services regard Fanmi Nou as all-encompassing. Even when helping immigrant families meant engaging with a system that was unfamiliar, in a direct response to the effects of isolation and uncertainty, members from Fanmi Nou gathered, discussed, and provided.

Embedded Relationships

Thus far, I have reviewed how Fanmi Nou engages with a variety of U.S. systems, including the education and social services systems, financial and psychological assistance, and the legal system through navigating immigration policies. Analyzing how this immigration services center engages with systems like the education and legal ones, gives context to the relationships between children, staff members, and their families at Fanmi Nou.

As briefly mentioned in the description of Fanmi Nou, this nonprofit adheres to a village model philosophy, wherein children exist at the nexus of a web of relationships. The organization's village model closely resembles Bronfenbrenner's (2005) ecological systems theory that I mention earlier in this chapter. In this framework, children are enmeshed in a series of systems, ranging from the immediate environment of the home to the macrosystem of societal attitudes and ideologies. One anthropological critique of Bronfenbrenner's theory is that the different levels of systems cannot be easily separated, as the model suggests. Each level may have direct impacts on other levels, as well as on the individual in the center of the model. More macro-level systems, though seemingly far from the individual in the model, can have immediate impacts on their life. To help understand the ways this organization facilitates picking and choosing which aspects of American life (behaviors, norms, values, etc.) to embrace and which to refuse for immigrant children and families, it is important to recognize the relationships in which children at the after-school and summer programs are embedded.

Body-World Relations

The various systems outlined in both Fanmi Nou's village model, and in Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory relate to Thomas Csordas's (2015) discussion of body-world relations in phenomenology. Csordas (2015) describes key phenomenology figures' approaches to conceptualizing body-world relations, particularly those of Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Michel Foucault, and Pierre Bourdieu. Csordas (2015) notes how these three interpretations of embodiment, taken in aggregate form, make up

the essence of phenomenology, particularly in regard to the notion of agency. Csordas (2015) details the differing "operative locus of agency," or positionality of agency in body-world relations, for each of these scholars.

Merleau-Ponty conceives of the body as acting on the world; his "locus of agency" is existence. By existing, bodies impact their environment. Conversely, Foucault is primarily concerned with how the world acts upon our bodies. Agency, for Foucault, is related to power relations, and the degree of power bodies possess in environments that constrain them. For Bourdieu, one's body is a part of a reciprocal engagement with the world, both influencing and being influenced by it. In Bourdieu's model, agency comes into play at the level of habitus, as I briefly discuss in relation to strategic engagement. These scholars of phenomenology describe the "body" in body-world relations as the individual body, though their models work for a collective body as well. When engaging with various systems (i.e. the macro-political economy, the federal level immigration policy landscape, the institutional level of the Boston education system, the micro-level relationships between individuals), actors at Fanmi Nou, and Fanmi Nou as a broader community, position themselves and their agency in relation to these systems. Next, I will describe these individual and broader level relationships and systems interactions.

Relationships Between Children and Staff

One of these direct, individual level relationships is that between children and staff members of Fanmi Nou. Staff members may occupy a variety of roles when interacting with students in the after-school and summer programs at Fanmi Nou. At one

moment, a staff member could be a tutor: challenging students in their academic work. In another moment, this staff member becomes a child's confidante, serving more of the role of a trusted adult ally. Still, in other times, a staff member may joke with a student—often at the staff member's own expense—and laugh along with them. As Nadia put it, she "wears many hats" when serving the students of Fanmi Nou.

Amongst staff members, relationships to children were not merely academic. Though a primary function of the after-school program was to assist students in homework and enrichment activities, many interview informants spoke of the friendships that formed between them and their students. Kervens spoke about running into excited students and their families at church. He noted these informal encounters were a nice way to keep in contact with students outside of the after-school program. Nadia spoke about being a source of comfort for students who were going through difficult life experiences, such as the death of a family member. Students could confide in these staff members.

Though it is evident staff members have a positive impact on the students they interact with, it is also clear from my interviews with staff members that children have a substantial influence on staff members. The impact is bidirectional. Staff members spoke of learning from children, whether it was traits like patience or creativity, or gleaning insight into their experiences and points of view. In response to a question about what working at Fanmi Nou is like, Kervens noted that working there forced him to become more aware of himself. If he observed a student was not proficient in English, he translated to Haitian Creole to the best of his ability. If he observed a student was not understanding an academic topic, he would adjust his teaching style to fit their needs.

Kervens taught students at a variety of levels and being self aware of his teaching methods helped him to meet students where they were.

Relationships Between Children and Parents

Parents in Fanmi Nou appear to speak readily with their children about their migration experience. When parents open the doors to this conversation, children are inquisitive about their Haitian roots. Sometimes, the temporary visit of a Haitian relative prompts this curiosity. Other times, a comment about school and grades leads to a discussion about how things were different for parents in Haiti. One parent interviewee recounted having her children sit down as she explained to them how difficult it was to come to the U.S. not knowing English. This parent wanted her children to appreciate what they have, as she discussed the difficulty of integrating into a new society. Several other parents spoke of the United States as an opportunity. For their children, it is an opportunity for an education and the prospect of a good job. For some parents, like Lovely, it is an "opportunity to move on" from circumstances in Haiti.

Bernice, a mother of three, immigrated to the U.S. with her sister. Her father, a migrant of the early 1980s, was already here when she arrived. She discussed the differences between her and her husband's immigration experience. For her, it matters at what age someone immigrates:

> Because I came here as a teenager, but my husband came when he was an adult, so we often talk about the differences of me coming here; the difficulties I had. Because I also had to leave my mom behind. Yeah. So um, yeah. It's always because we-, because of the differences between myself and my husband. We, you know, I tend to understand them more, I think, than my husband because he

> came here as an adult, so that's when we always have a discussion about that (08/13/2020).

Because she spent more time in the U.S. than her husband, Bernice felt her children could relate to her more. The distance between her and her children's experience is shorter.

Relationships as Keys

The relationships of adults and children are not merely vertical. They are keys to understanding other relationships. For example, parent and child interactions and relationships have a direct impact on child to child relationships. Take the case of Bernice. In her childhood, she experienced various forms of bullying when immigrating from Haiti to the U.S., particularly when attending a Boston public school. Bernice remembers being teased for her accent. She would resort to silence, so as not to be ridiculed by those who were unfamiliar with Creole speakers. She remembers being constrained to certain parts of the lunchroom, so as not to provoke other students who seemed irked by her mere presence in "their school." "I couldn't even go to the store without someone picking on me...And yeah, it was an awful experience, and I survived it without fighting so" [laughing]. Bernice described how she speaks to her children about inclusivity:

> Yeah, even though you have children here, like my children, like they don't-, I make sure that because what I've been through here; I make sure that when other kids like, for example at my church, when other kids are from Haiti, I make sure that I introduce them; I say like this kid is from-, he or she is from Haiti, you have to, you know, not just be nice to them, make sure that you talk and, you know, in Creole, whatever little Creole that you can, to show them that you know-, you understand them. Because the minute that someone from Haiti comes here and the

> first thing they hear is that you are addressing them in English, all of a sudden you just wanna back away, because you don't know English (08/13/2020).

Bernice's account exemplifies how an individual's past traumatic experiences may inform how they teach their own children. She makes sure that her own American-born children include Haitian immigrant children because she intimately knows what it feels like to be uprooted to a hostile place. The account also suggests that as a Haitian migrant herself, Bernice may attempt to build on her own experiences to protect future migrants from suffering in the same way. She emphasizes a deep-seated yearning for things to be different for Haitian immigrant children today. Perhaps, by instructing her own American-born child to be kind to Haitian children, she is attempting to rewrite a narrative of bullying that existed when she was her child's age. Can a parent truly reconcile her own experiences of trauma attending the very school she is now sending her child to? Bernice's memory of past bullying becomes generative, by changing how children interact with other children, rather than just destructive, by reliving a traumatic experience. American-born children of immigrants, then, must forge their identities in light of living under their parent's legacy of immigrant experience in the United States. These children's lives are actively connected to Haiti through their parents' experiences, but grounded in their own American experiences. Bernice's actions to rewrite a narrative of bullying are parallel to the work of immigrant-founded and -driven agencies, like Fanmi Nou. Through tangible support, such as resource allocation, child care, and education classes, the organization changes narratives of immigration trauma. An aspect

that may also help rewrite narratives of immigration trauma that I will discuss in greater detail is the sense of community that the organization nurtures.

The above account also highlights the weight of language in the immigration experience. Staff member, Nadia, described to me her own account of migrating to the U.S. from Canada. She painted the picture of a character, a tall man, whom she encountered as a child while waiting for one of her parents to register her at an American school. She remembered feeling confused, and maybe a little disoriented, around all the adults speaking English. Nadia was surprised, however, when the tall man spoke to her and she could understand him. Speaking in either French or Haitian Creole—Nadia did not quite remember—the tall man addressed her directly. "Whoa, he-, I'm in-, I'm in the USA and he's speaking my language. Like I understand what he's saying. I get a break from all the English happening around me," (07/03/2020). Nadia imagined that children at Fanmi Nou may feel similar emotions of excitement and relief when they connect with another person who speaks the same language.

Relationships Between Children

Though students at the after-school program are not immune to the occasional conflict, the responses from staff members who work with these children reflected an overwhelmingly positive description of student to student interactions. Staff used terms such as "siblings", "family", and "community" to characterize the relationships between children at Fanmi Nou. The students that are a part of the organization attend a variety of

schools in the Boston area, but when they arrive at the after-school program, they share a piece of themselves with many other children. As one staff member, Jenny, described:

> So, like I say, it's like their own little community. I mean, just sitting there you can feel the sibling vibe; the rivalry still going on at Fanmi Nou. They formed a little friendship. You see them with different groups and hanging out. So all the students actually work really well together. They interact well with each other. It's their own community. It's like their own belonging community: they leave school, they come here. They know definitely that they fit in. All the kids around them have like the same social background, so they definitely fit in. So I think that also makes it easier for them (07/06/2020).

Sometimes, students could be more helpful to one another than a staff member could be. One staff member interviewee described a general scenario where young students would take initiative and attempt to teach other children when they could tell the student did not fully understand a teacher's lesson. When students were not connecting on an educational level, they would rely on play to make connections. Play often transcended boundaries of difference between Haitian-born and American-born students, when relating about being in the same level of school could not. For example, even though two similar-aged children—one a recent migrant from Haiti and one an American-born child with Haitian parents—may not be at a place to learn the same lessons in school, they are perfect partners, or opponents, in play.

I recall an instance when three students (one student had recently arrived from Haiti) pretended a cafeteria bench was a city bus. One student sat in the front, while the other two students stood at various intervals around the room, waiting for the bus driving student to "pick them up." The students quickly realized they would have to leave their positions in order to ride the bus, however, as their bench bus was attached to a table,

which was bolted to the floor of the cafeteria. The bus driving student performed a typical MBTA (Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority) scenario by nodding to his passengers as they boarded the bus and swiped their pretend CharlieCards (reusable cards loaded with cash value to pay bus and subway fares) at the front.

The American-born student that was not acting the bus driver boarded the cafeteria bench bus first, allowing the recently arrived Haitian student to observe his modeled behavior, before attempting the ritual for himself. The American-born students did not explicitly say that they were going to show the Haitian-born student which behaviors to enact in order to successfully ride the bus because he might not know how, but rather engaged in an informal modeling of this behavior through an act of play. This interaction was, indeed, play, but it is play that took on the function of teaching someone how a system works in this country. Because I did not see this particular play scene previously, I wonder if the students would have enacted it even if the Haitian-born student was not present. Perhaps the American-born students knew this scenario would be novel for the Haitian-born student and were excited to communicate their knowledge about how things worked "here." In a brief, roughly five-minute scene, I observed Haitian-born and American-born children use play to fashion connections to the experience of riding the bus in the city, and to fashion connections to each other.

Relationships Between Children and Fanmi Nou

Though impacted by key individual actors, such as other children, their parents, and staff members, like Bronfenbrenner's (2005) ecological systems theory suggests,

systems also influence children. These systems could include Fanmi Nou, the students' schools, and local municipalities, for example. One theme I noticed while working with the organization and its members exemplifies the interconnectedness of the student to their environment. At Fanmi Nou, I see a focus to make sure that Haitian students remain up to speed, academically, with their peers. One staff member, Carine, works closely with students in the first through the fifth grade. Carine had only been with Fanmi Nou for about a year at the time of our interview, but she described her time there as a blessing. Carine summarized Fanmi Nou's ability to accommodate its students:

> They [Fanmi Nou] usually see the level of the student and see which school they go to. Because sometimes the school that they go to is not-, doesn't meet their level just because for whatever reason. So what Fanmi Nou does, they usually have a meeting with a parent and say, Okay, here are those call-, the best call that your child might-, that your child will fit really well. And then these really are better public schools or charter schools for them. So Fanmi Nou's really good at helping their children like that (07/02/2020).

This excerpt shows a connection between a child and the Boston school systems—whether public or private—facilitated by the organization. In this example, staff members at the organization advocate for the best interest of the Haitian children that rely on their programming. Fanmi Nou is attempting to match a particular school to a child's needs, rather than asking the child to fit a mold for attending a certain school. Knowledge of the differences within the school system is a form of capital shared with parents. This could be an example of Fanmi Nou teaching the parents that use its services to exercise citizenship and make demands on the system—ensuring their children receive an appropriate education.

In order to accommodate and secure resources for their students, Fanmi Nou engages with U.S. education and legal systems in system-maintaining and -challenging ways, simultaneously sustaining the ways these systems operate and promoting change. Because Fanmi Nou relies on donors and funders, their engagement with these systems is strategic. They cannot be an organization that advocates for change in the immigration system if they do not have the resources to *be* an organization. Just as Fanmi Nou is placed within larger structures and systems, so too are children in its programming. These layers of relationships that children in the after-school program create impact their cultivation of identity. The next chapter, "Identity Formation," will argue for children's bicultural identity development in a time when that very identity may be threatened.

CHAPTER FIVE: Identity Formation

In this chapter, I argue that children at Fanmi Nou forge bicultural identities amid an atmosphere of immigrant hostility and prejudice, which can be a buffer against the negative health impacts of discrimination. As discussed in Chapter Four, immigrant youth and children of immigrants are embedded in relationships: relationships between other children, their parents, staff members at Fanmi Nou, and broader macro-level systems. These embedded relationships directly impact youth development. Through relationships that encourage an identification with Haiti, children actively push back on a society that often attempts to thwart a Haitian identity.

First, I discuss two terms prevalent in the literature on immigrant identity and health: transnationalism and biculturalism. I will argue how each term is more fitting for certain categories of participants at Fanmi Nou. As part of my argument, I will explore how children may engage in a type of *bicultural self-fashioning*, incorporating their external environments into their conceptions of self. I will also include a discussion about how staff members and parents at Fanmi Nou distinguish between Haitian-born and American-born children, and how these processes of distinction relate to identity development. Next, I will argue that children at Fanmi Nou positively associate with Haiti and Haitian culture, and will elaborate on how this happens on different levels (i.e. institutional and personal). Parents, staff members, and Fanmi Nou all nurture this identification with Haiti in various ways.

Transnationalism and Biculturalism

When thinking about the ways children of Haitian immigrants at Fanmi Nou engage with both the United States and their parents' or grandparents' home country of Haiti, I initially thought that the term *transnationalism* (Glick Schiller, Basch, and Blanc-Szanton 1992) would encompass this dual identification. In their article, "Transnationalism: A New Analytic Framework for Understanding Migration," Nina Glick Schiller, Linda Basch, and Cristina Blanc-Szanton describe this concept as a "process by which immigrants build social fields that link their country of origin and their country of settlement" (1). These early theorists invoke Singer's (1995) system-maintaining and -challenging praxis language, when they posit that a transnational framework allows for one to investigate how migrants "use their social relationships and their varying and multiple identities generated from their simultaneous positioning in several social locations both to accommodate to and to resist the difficult circumstances and the dominant ideologies they encounter in their transnational fields," (4-5). Though I have described the system-maintaining and -challenging aspects of Fanmi Nou at the institutional level, a transnational identity may enable an *individual* to act in a simultaneously accommodating and resisting way.

After discussions with and guidance from two scholars—one an anthropologist with expertise in the areas of immigrant health and identity and the other in transnational migration and Haiti—I thought more critically about how I am conceptualizing transnationalism. Rosalyn Negrón and Elizabeth McAlister, respectively, questioned my use of transnationalism to describe the experiences of children. To Dr. Negrón, living a

transnational life meant being embedded in a web of relationships that bridges two places. Transnational immigrants often maintain social ties to people in their homeland. These ties could also take an economic form, as when immigrants in the U.S. send remittances back to Haiti, or a political form, like when Haitians in the U.S. engage in home country politics. Transnationalism describes the symbolic ties of being both here (the U.S.) and there (Haiti). In one example of transnationalism, Bernice told me about her discussion with her children when Haitian family members come to stay with them:

> From a very young age, they always have family members coming from Haiti to come here. And that's another thing we always have to talk to them about. Because kids here they don't understand, you know, why so and so has to come and use my room or- (laughs). So these are the things that we constantly have to talk to them about because we're not from here, we still have family members in Haiti (08/13/2020).

Though the children at Fanmi Nou do exhibit clear connections to an idea of Haiti, as I will discuss later in this chapter, using the concept of transnationalism to describe their ties to the homeland does not work in the same way as it does when describing the behaviors of adults. Young children are not, for example, necessarily the ones collecting and sending remittances to family members back in Haiti, actively participating in Haitian politics, or facilitating phone conversations and visits between family in the U.S. and Haiti. Here, the term *biculturalism* may be better suited for understanding the ways children at Fanmi Nou forge both a Haitian and American identity.

Emerging out of the literature on acculturation, biculturalism rejects the notion that migrants leave behind all or most aspects and ties from their home countries, fully adopting a receiving country's lifestyle and culture (Szapocznik, Kurtines, and Fernandez

1980; S. J. Schwartz and Unger 2010). Instead, individuals with bicultural identities may simultaneously identify with their home and receiving cultures. I compare a bicultural identity to an optical illusion. At one moment—in one way of seeing things—a child is viewed as Haitian, while at another they are viewed as American. How do children at Fanmi Nou experience living in this shifting, two-way perception by others?

As Seth Schwartz and Jennifer Unger (2010) argue, biculturalism also applies to "children of immigrants who—although they are born and raised in the receiving society—are likely deeply embedded in the heritage culture at home with their families," (26). At Fanmi Nou, I argue that both transnationalism and biculturalism are present, but that these different modes of engaging with multiple countries and cultures arise in different categories of participants. Parents and staff members may possess transnational identities, while children in the after-school program hold bicultural ones. A transnational identity more aptly describes the relationships adults have with Haiti, because they are afforded more agency to engage with Haiti in ways characteristic of a traditional definition of transnationalism. This does not exclude parents and staff members from being bicultural, of course, but in my analysis, I focus on the bicultural identities of children.

It is also important to note here, that immigrants and children of immigrants leading transnational and bicultural lives is not a recent phenomenon. The continuation of this behavior and identification is distinct and remarkable, however, given the increased assaults on immigration and immigrant status by the Trump administration. It is necessary to acknowledge that the lived experiences for children at Fanmi Nou may not

be that of imminent identity threat if they were to identify as Haitian. Immigrant discrimination at the macro-policy level may not readily translate to individual experience. Further, the Trump administration, and all of its hostility towards immigrants, does not automatically equate to "the United States." However, beliefs and assumptions can trickle down from these larger discourses and affect individual behavior, and thus individual experience. Consequently, contemporary transnationalism and biculturalism means something different in an era of renewed anti-immigrant hostility, particularly hostility against Haitians.

Authors Lisa Lopez Levers and Debra Hyatt-Burkhart (2011) have studied this phenomenon. In their article, "Immigration Reform and the Potential for Psychosocial Trauma: The Missing Link of Lived Human Experience," they aim to draw attention to the often absent emphasis of the impact immigration legislation and policy reform—or public debate and media coverage of it—has on lived experience. Written in 2011, their article is a response to changes in immigration policies in the U.S., such as the Arizona Senate Bill (ASB) 1070. The ASB 1070 "made it a state crime to be present in the United States without authorization, and empowered police to inquire into the immigration status of any person they stopped with a 'reasonable suspicion' of unlawful presence," (Lopez 2011, 3). Lopez Levers and Hyatt-Burkhart categorize the potential detrimental effects of migration as stress and psychosocial trauma and provide an analysis of literature related to these effects after the passing of ASB 1070. In an era of changing policies like TPS and the Public Charge Rule, there is a need for considering the lived experiences of these policies.

Using his own experience of immigration at a young age to imagine how it affects students in the after-school program, the staff member Ernst highlighted the difficulty of displacement from one's home country, especially when the receiving country is less than welcoming:

> ...but it [Ernst's experience of immigration] was not that voluntary, it was involuntary moving, although I used to come here just for vacation with my family, but that displacement, it's like they uprooted me from the place I know. And I think that creates some kind of discomfort in kid's life and because that did create a discomfort for me as well. Yes, our kids will acculturate, they will adjust for a certain time. But for about two or three years in the life, so they will suffer consequently. Specifically when the place, the host place, is not highly welcoming to many (07/08/2020).

Though Ernst acknowledges the discomfort of migrating from one's home country, he emphasizes children will eventually acculturate and adjust. Consistently, in other parent and staff member interviews, discussions about biculturalism often took the form of discussions about acculturation and assimilation.

Like Ernst, other interviewees spoke about both the ease of assimilation for younger children, and the hardship of migration. They conceptualized this hardship as impermanent, without a lasting impact. Jenny noted:

> I definitely think that it [migration] affects them because once again, it's not easy to just like pick up and leave where they-, um what-, everything that they know to like a new environment. And it affects, in my opinion, their school work. But once again, it doesn't-, it doesn't affect them like in the long run, like they're always ready to pick up and continue and um and do the work (07/06/2020).

This paradigmatic adaptability, interwoven with models of suffering, emerged from many of the interviews I conducted. A third staff member that spoke on this, Kervens,

differentiated between the adaptability of children that immigrate at a younger versus an older age:

> The kids are fine. They assimilate fine into everything, um, they're able to pick up, pick up on things a little bit quicker. Um, but as far as like the other students. Let's say, the ones that probably just came here and they're already like in second grade or third grade. It's definitely a little bit harder for them. First off, like they just don't know English. So I guess that's like their barrier (07/02/2020).

Here, adaptation is expected. Kervens also highlights language differences as being a significant barrier for adjustment to an unfamiliar environment. Several other staff members and parents spoke about "not knowing English" as an obstacle, recounting their own experiences of initially having these difficulties. Lovely told me how she talked to her own children about her migration experience:

> I um, have them sit down and I talked to them about how hard it is for someone who does not speak English to come into this country. And then when they come, how they have to suffer, especially at the beginning, prior to them learning the language, you know, for them to integrate themselves into the society (08/05/2020).

Lovely connects English proficiency to integration. Besides language, parents and staff members saw the novelty of American culture as a barrier as well. In a new culture, Lucson described, "you're going to meet and face every day new people in your life," (07/10/2020). Though I could interpret this phrase as an exciting opportunity, Lucson framed it as overwhelming, unfamiliar territory to navigate.

When I asked Lucson if they ever see the history of a student's parent's migration exhibit itself at the after-school program, consistently, he emphasized language:

> This [the Haitian or Spanish language] is part of the history because that means this is who they really are. Okay, and they are American, but they are from, you

> know, different parts of the world. They are an immigrant, first of all, yes, in terms of language, the fact that they used to try to speak other languages, this is a fact that I can say that that it is affecting their, you know, their life (07/10/2020).

Students are American, but first, they are immigrants. Lucson's comments represent the concurrent nature of identity. They also present a child's ability to speak a non-English language, specifically Haitian Creole or Spanish in this case, as a part of their history and identity, inextricably linked to "who they really are." Lucson noted that, although students speak English at the after-school program, children know, or are aware, that they are Haitian when they speak Haitian Creole at home with their parents. They *know* they are from Haiti through their parents.

Lucson later astutely remarked, when speaking Haitian Creole or French with students that have recently migrated and do not know English, "you find yourself in Haiti, while you're in America." He continued, "this you know, you know that you help them [non English-speaking students] while you also help your country, your home country, and at the same point, you also help this American community." Helping a student takes on a wider significance; it positively impacts both Haiti and the United States. The success of bicultural students may confer beneficial effects on these two broader nations. Since conducting this interview, I have often wished I followed up on this specific point. Is it the act of speaking Haitian Creole or French while in the U.S. that helps Haiti? Then, is it the ability to teach Haitian immigrant children in the U.S. that helps the American community? Here, transnationalism and/or biculturalism manifests itself in the synchronicity of engaging in behavior as if you were in Haiti (i.e. speaking

Haitian Creole or French) while physically being somewhere else. Phenomenologically speaking, people may embody Haiti as they lead lives in the United States.

Because I am making an argument for the biculturalism in children of Haitian immigrants at Fanmi Nou, it is necessary to address both the Haitian *and* American aspects of identity. Observation of the American facets of children's identities emerged in much more implicit and expected ways. For one, most children in the program primarily spoke English. As I have previously discussed, some students occasionally engaged in speaking Haitian Creole with one another, or with staff members, but the primary language of communication between children was English. Second, children at the after-school program attended Boston-based schools, whether public or private, and primarily spent their time at the after-school program working on homework assignments from these U.S.-based institutions. In these ways, children are embedded in American culture in less obvious, visible, or remarked upon ways. Conversely, children make explicit references to being Haitian, as I will analyze later in this chapter. To reiterate, neither the U.S., nor Haiti, is a monolith. It is difficult to describe exactly what "American" culture means, but both Haitian and American elements contribute to children's bicultural identities.

Transnationalism and biculturalism are closely tied to processes of identity formation. Before I further discuss how children at Fanmi Nou forge bicultural identities, however, I must provide some foundational definitions of identity and identity formation.

Defining Identity

Defining the concept of identity poses a similar challenge to conceptualizing trauma, as I discussed in an earlier chapter. Though I aim to use a working definition of identity, I acknowledge the limitations in even attempting to reduce and define it. I do hope, however, to make a case for the utility of the definition of identity and identity formation as dynamic. As Schwartz, Montgomery, and Briones (2006) offer, identity is not a specific, bounded concept; it is constantly in flux. Identity may be one umbrella term that describes a broad range of conceptualizations. Schwartz et al. use an exploration of the process of acculturation to help situate their definition of identity. Specifically, they use three distinct types of identity to structure their exploration into the process of acculturation: self-identity, social identity, and cultural identity. I will define identity by collapsing Schwartz et al.'s individual definitions of the types of identity. Identity is, at once, "the goals, values, and beliefs an individual adopts and holds" considering their social and cultural ties (6). My proposed definition considers identity's fluidity. Identities are constantly undergoing shifts and fluctuations as an individual's environment changes. One's body and mind also change to adapt to these new environmental conditions. It is important to recognize that the definition of identity I rely on does not capture, wholly, the essence of identity.

Objective and Bicultural Self-Fashioning

Joseph Dumit (2010) proposes a concept that complements the dynamic nature of identity formation: *objective self-fashioning*. If the objective self is the classification of

self through fact and knowledge, objective self-fashioning encompasses the process and "site" of this knowledge production (367). Objective self-fashioning occurs when individuals incorporate information about themselves that they have collected from their environment into their lives. Dumit's concept arose out of an exploration of biotechnopower, particularly PET (positron emission tomography) scans. PET scanning provides an individual with high-resolution images of the active brain. For Dumit, brain scans became the objective entities around which individuals would fashion themselves.

A reader may ask, what are the objects with which children at Fanmi Nou are fashioning themselves? Dumit's objective self-fashioning helps me to understand the dynamic, fluid quality of identity formation, but the objects in this case are less clear than PET scans. Instead, I propose that *bicultural self-fashioning* better explains the process of children's identity formation. In bicultural self-fashioning, children incorporate cues from actors in their immediate surroundings about being Haitian, but living in the U.S., into their conceptions of self. The "object" in this type of self-fashioning is more ambiguous and less material. Relationships between children, staff members, parents, and micro- and macro-level systems send children messages about aspects of identity. Through bicultural self-fashioning, immigrant children may reposition their identities in a new, U.S.-based context. I provide a more in-depth discussion of the specific ways parents, staff members, and other children help foster and fashion children's identity later on in this chapter.

Another important point to make is that both Haitian-born and U.S.-born children may experience identity shifts when moving back and forth between the spaces of a home defined by Haitian culture and the external context of U.S.-based school. For example,

one parent, Bernice, talked about how her background as a Haitian immigrant affects her children:

> Oh it affects them a lot. And I know they talk about it. Uh, because not being able to do certain things because, oh, you know, we're not used to being-, we're not-, we're just not, we're just different, and I know that because they talk about not being able to go to parties all the time. And that's something in our culture we don't let kids-, I mean let them-, I take them to parties and even at a certain age, like my son, I know when he was like 14 there were times he would want to go to his friend's house. Uh, and we're like, no you're not going because yeah. And I mean, there are Haitian parents that do let their kids go, but I guess because, you know, like I always tell them, I'm not that Americanized (08/13/2020).

In Bernice's home, going to parties and friends' houses equates to American society. Though her children were born in the U.S., she noted how their Haitian roots affected them through her parenting style.

Robert Smith's (2005) exploration of the transnational lives of Mexican immigrants and their children illustrates the concept of bicultural self-fashioning. Smith describes how, as Mexican immigrants move between New York and Puebla, Mexico, they create new social roles, ideas of race, and positions in politics. They incorporate information and both explicit and implicit messages from their outside environments into their conceptualizations of self. Though bicultural self-fashioning may be helpful to use analytically, it may not fully address the simultaneity of harboring multiple identities. Integrating messages we receive about ourselves from the outside world into the existing fabric of our self is dynamic in the sense that it changes as more information becomes available, however Smith's work with transnational Mexican migrants better encapsulates the process of allowing certain aspects of identity to shine through, while temporarily suppressing others. As the individuals in Smith's research move back and forth between

New York and Puebla, different aspects of identity take center stage, but the temporarily suppressed aspects do not disappear. Sociologist Erving Goffman's (1956) seminal work, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*, is helpful here, specifically, his distinction between "front stage" and "back stage" in the broader sociological metaphor of social interaction as a theater. As children at Fanmi Nou move between spaces of home, school, the after-school program, and others, certain identities (e.g. Haitian, Haitian immigrant, Haitian American, Black) take front stage in this process of negotiation.

Bicultural self-fashioning, on the other hand, suggests a continuous, additive nature to identity formation, leaving little room for the possibility of intentional, temporary identity suppression. Similarly, children at Fanmi Nou may harbor multiple identities, engaging in this temporary identity suppression and augmentation as they move between the spaces of home and school. Both bicultural self-fashioning and Smith's (2005) work with harboring multiple identities simultaneously is helpful for thinking about how children at Fanmi Nou form perceptions of self, considering the events that occurred during my period of fieldwork.

Incorporating Current Events into Sense of Self

On Friday, June 12th, staff members invited me to attend a Fanmi Nou-hosted student discussion on recent events, in particular about the murder of George Floyd and what the media portrayed following this atrocity. Organizers planned for two discussions via Zoom to occur: one for elementary to early middle school-age children, and one for high school-age children. I attended the first discussion for the younger subset of

students. It functioned as a space where students could discuss and reflect upon recent events. There was one young adult moderator, four to five students, two staff members, and myself. I was very aware of my positionality and the space I took up as a white person attending a discussion prompted by the brutality of a white police officer. I left my Zoom microphone on mute for the entire discussion, signaling that I was there to listen. This era of COVID-19 and videoconferencing software allowed me to display my self-silencing very visibly.

The moderator began by asking students a set of questions: What does racism mean to you? Have you ever experienced discrimination because of the color of your skin? What do you make of the recent events happening in America? The moderator called on each student that was interested in answering the questions. One older student spoke of the distinction between saying "Black lives matter" and "all lives matter," by noting that when we say Black lives matter, we aren't saying that other lives do not. We are just saying that Black lives are often not respected or valued in the same way as other lives, and so right now we are focusing on Black lives. This student concisely verbalized a distinction in rhetoric that many adults fail or refuse to grasp. When responding to a different question, another student noted that although "some white cops are good, some are bad." The moderator briefly stepped in and described the differences between individual police members being "bad" and the system that trains police officers as being flawed, asking students if this distinction made sense before continuing. The discussion signified the extent to which these children extracted, processed, and conveyed current

events, and left me with a better idea of these children's understanding of being Black in the United States.

Haitian-Born and American-Born Children

This deliberation of identity formation and bicultural self-fashioning provides useful context for analyzing questions of differing identity between Haitian-born and American-born children at Fanmi Nou. Ernst, the staff member that immigrated to the U.S. as a teenager, recounted how his mother navigated the realms of the home and outside context. "The Haitian community and-, as my mom used to tell me, they give you three places: that's home, school, and church, so convening around that place that we call the triangular aspect of church, school, and home. So if you go beyond that, you will probably be in trouble with your parents," (07/08/2020). According to Ernst, this parental guidance relates to a distinction in mindset between Haitian-born and American-born students:

> And that's one of the cultural values that some of the youngsters come with, coming from Haiti. Whereas kids who were born here, it's-, I feel the-, that instant gratifications concept they have. And they always feel well, this is my place and I have it, and definitely I'll find ways to to survive and whereas kids that migrated from here have a different mindset (07/08/2020).

Earlier in this chapter, I discussed how Kervens differentiated between younger and older children in terms of adaptability to a new environment. In this same response, he also noted differences between Haitian-born and American-born children as they relate to how children interact with their parents:

> Um, so I think there's kinda like two levels of the migration. So let's say, like, the kids that are born here and the kids that are probably just here, but for the kids that are born here, I feel like, as far as like family struggles, is more so a disconnect between like the parents and the kids (07/02/2020).

Kervens identified a disconnect between U.S.-born children and their Haitian immigrant parents, but later noted that these students tend to pick up on things quicker than their Haitian-born counterparts. Consistent with his earlier response and the theme highlighted previously, Kervens discussed the central role language plays in these differences:

> As far as for us in Fanmi Nou, kind of interacting with-, we gotta find someone that's kind of like, well, that knows Haitian Creole, that could translate like pretty much everything into-, and it's not even to say that the kids don't know how to do it. The kids probably know like all the-, like they know math, they know all that stuff. It's more so like, they're just not used to reading directions in English, so translating directions. But once that kind of gets over the hump, then they're fine (07/02/2020).

Here, Kervens noted that Haitian-born children are familiar with academic subjects like math, but their unfamiliarity with English is a barrier to completing their work.

Other researchers have analyzed identity in children of immigrants. Mary Waters (1994), for example, took a comparative approach to studying ethnic and racial identities of second-generation Black immigrants in New York City. Particularly, Waters compared identity descriptions of second-generation immigrant adolescents to those of first-generation immigrant adolescents. This qualitative comparison led to the creation of distinct identity categories, which lend themselves to different perceptions of race and opportunity in the United States. One of Waters's propositions is that "youngsters who identify as black Americans tend to see more racial discrimination and limits to opportunities for blacks in the United States," with the opposite being true for adolescents

who identify as ethnic West Indians (795). This observation resonates with Ernst's comment above, about a difference in mindset and cultural values between Haitian-born and American-born children. Ernst contends that children who have just immigrated from Haiti possess the cultural value of the "triangular aspect of church, school, and home," which he differentiates from an American-born child's cultural value of instant gratification. I can relate Waters's comments on perceptions of discrimination to Fanmi Nou's Black Lives Matter discussion. Although identifying as Haitian and Haitian American, children reflected on what it meant to be "read as" Black in the U.S. at this moment in time. Children pondered what it meant to identify, culturally, with a certain category of identity (Haitian), while being perceived in an undifferentiated category of identity (Black).

Staff members were not the only adults who commented on differences between children depending on their birth and initial socialization country. Parents distinguished between raising children born in Haiti and children born in the United States. As Lovely mentions, "So I always talk to them, trying to give them the education that we received back home. Trying to raise them, you know, which is hard because it's totally two different educations in terms of raising a child in this country and back home," (08/05/2020). Lovely explained that her experience of education and in particular, disciplining, was different growing up than it seems to be for her children in the U.S. today. Though parents drew distinctions like these, both Haitian-born and American-born children at the after-school program exhibited a connection to Haiti and Haitian culture.

Identification with Haiti

Carly Ritger: How do you think your or your family's experience of being an immigrant in the US affects your children?

Myrlande: Um, it's affected them, you know, we are, um Haitian like I always said to them, I said, we come from Haiti. Your parents are Haitian. And you guys are also Haitian. It is true, you guys weren't born in Haiti, you guys born here in the USA, but you are Haitian. That's the Haitian blood that's in you.

Across interviews with and observation of staff member, parent, and child informants, a theme of identifying with Haiti was prevalent. In my data, this identification took a variety of forms. For example, children directly referred to being Haitian, such as speaking Haitian Creole, listening to Haitian music, and eating Haitian food. These references were positive in the sense that children spoke with pride in the situations I observed.

Past research has explored the positive effect of strong ethnic identification on mental health and wellbeing (Brown 2020; Ha 2019; Rivas-Drake et al. 2014). Particularly, this ethnic identification can serve as a buffer for the ill effects of discrimination against that very same identity. Researchers have discussed how factors such as confidence in a certain ethnic identity suggest one has dealt with discrimination before, and thus is better equipped to deal with this discrimination in the future (Ha 2019). Further, a strong ethnic identification suggests a community of individuals in which to share pride in this identity and strategies for dealing with discrimination, which I expand on in the next chapter.

Children at Fanmi Nou do not passively identify with Haiti. My data suggests they learn this identification. In different ways, staff members, parents, and other children cultivate it, helping children create and sustain bicultural identities.

Parent Promotion of a Haitian Identity

As this section's opening conversation exhibits, parents at Fanmi Nou are integral actors in teaching their children about their Haitian roots. From this parent's account, a Haitian identity pulses through the veins of Haitian-born and U.S.-born children to Haitian family members alike. Most, if not all, of the parents I spoke with in an interview capacity said they talk with their children about Haiti and/or their immigration experience. Bernice noted, "I think we started, I don't remember what age, but from time to time we talked to them about where we came from. You know, the life that we used to live back in Haiti," (08/13/2020).

The parent featured in the opening interview interaction, Myrlande, immigrated to the U.S. in 2012 with her husband and daughter, and then later had a son here. As we began the Zoom interview, Myrlande had her camera off, then turned it on briefly to let me know she was going to turn it off again because she needed to fold laundry. She mentioned that if at any point I needed it turned on, she would do so. At one moment in the interview, Myrlande said her children "know where they come from." According to her, they ask to travel to meet family members living in Haiti that they have never met before. Myrlande also spoke of material objects, or tangible points of reference, that help her children forge an identification with Haiti: "They saw pictures, they listen to-, they

like Haitian music, they know the lyrics of most of them, you know. They really like their roots" (08/22/2020).

Bernice expressed a yearning to teach her children about their Haitian roots, rather than having them passively learn about Haitian culture from school or other, more impersonal settings: "I don't just want them to learn about history from the classroom, from a book. I often tell them, you know, you have us as part of history that we can talk to you about, you know the type of life that we're living," (08/13/2020). This quote also shows that a Haitian identity is not solely rooted in genetics or history, but it is something that a family actively lives. In our interview, Bernice spoke about specific ways she teaches her own, and other children, about Haiti: "And we do activities about-, for Haitian um, like the Flag Day, we talk about it. For any young person who has never heard about Haiti, so constantly surrounded," (08/13/2020). Haitian flags and music comprise some material culture that help parents encourage a Haitian identity in their children. In this sense, children of Haitian immigrant parents are "constantly surrounded" by references to and reminders of Haiti, further solidifying their Haitian identity.

Staff Member Promotion of a Haitian Identity

Besides parents, staff members are key in child identity development. Staff members encouraged students to have positive associations with Haiti in formal and informal ways. As I have mentioned, Haitian immigrants founded Fanmi Nou, and the organization employs many staff members that, themselves, have ties to Haiti. Being around other Haitian people who speak Haitian Creole may reinforce a child's propensity

to think about Haiti. When I asked Lucson, the staff member that works on the administrative team, if he hears children in the after-school program talk about Haiti or about being Haitian, he recounted a time when a student spoke with him directly:

> Some of them [the students] used to ask me where I'm coming from, specifically, in Haiti. The north, or the south, stuff like that. Sometimes, for example, we have- I have-, there's a student. He went to Haiti and then uh when he comes back, he's telling me about, you know, the country, the adventure, the you know the history of the country, the people who made it. That was really cool. And then, yes, they're really proud. Yeah, that's happened to me (07/10/2020).

The students in this excerpt attempted to relate to Lucson's Haitian identity by asking him, geographically, where in Haiti he comes from. It suggests a degree of knowledge about the spatial makeup of the country. It also suggests a level of identification *beyond* Haiti. Being from Haiti is not a monolith, just as being from the U.S. is not. The children seek to connect with Lucson in a more local way; on a deeper level. The second half of Lucson's interaction with a student points to a level of both curiosity and pride in Haiti. From this account, the student was eager to share what he had learned while visiting Haiti, including what he learned about Haitian history with a staff member who, himself, is Haitian.

Institution-Level Promotion of a Haitian Identity

The fostering of a Haitian identity was not only communicated through individual staff members, but at a broader institutional level as well. For example, in a virtual flyer circulated to families that use its services, organization partners, staff members, and volunteers, Fanmi Nou summarized the services they provided. Titled, "Fanmi Nou

COVID-19 Services," this graphic boasted a variety of quantitative data, including the number of students that took part in the virtual academy (168), the number of individuals offered legal support to file for asylum (65), and the number of laptops delivered to student homes amidst the pandemic (64). One data point identified that 120 families were "served ethnic food 3 times a week." Culturally appropriate food provision is another example of material culture that links families, potentially businesses and restaurants, and mutual aid organizations.

In an organization-level effort to support an identification with Haiti, Fanmi Nou attempts to keep children in its programming engaged with the wider Haitian community. It encourages younger and older children alike to be involved with the community through structured projects, activities, and groups. Kervens described how the organization focuses on a promotion of Haitian culture in their programming:

> I think one thing that Fanmi Nou also tries to do with students, um kind of like have them, kind of like know their culture. Um, so as far as that like Haitian heritage month they get the kids involved. I know like uh last month I was helping out with the coding and like the art but like all their projects was based on Haitian heritage month so it kind of like having kids kind of like know their culture from the earl-, from the early start and kind of build upon that in like you see like a lot of like even the musicians build on the Haitian national anthem (07/02/2020).

In another example, at a staff meeting I attended via Zoom in early May 2020, one member updated the group that Fanmi Nou reached out to other Haitian organizations in the neighboring states of New York and New Jersey to check in about their COVID-19 response and to see if they needed any help. When Fanmi Nou engaged with the broader Haitian diaspora at a time of crisis, they reaffirmed their own identity as a Haitian group.

Staff members and Fanmi Nou are engaging in both a promotion of children's selves and a promotion of Haiti and Haitian culture. Kervens talked about what Fanmi Nou adds to the lives of the children in its after-school program, one of these things being a promotion of Haitian culture. He expressed how adults teach children about Haiti and Haitian culture, and how this fosters a sense of pride in these children's learned identities.

> So I think they definitely place a huge value on like, just what it means to be Haitian American, what it means to be Haitian, what it means to be Haitian American in the Boston community as well. So I think that kind of like ties up everything that Fanmi Nou kind of like embodies and whatnot. So not, just like, more so like a promotion of their self and their, and their wellbeing, but also kind of a promotion of like the Haitian community as organiz-, as a culture and organization and stuff" (07/02/2020).

Kervens's response reveals some nuance in identity politics for children of Haitian immigrants. Children may simultaneously be Haitian and Haitian American, and identifying this way in both the U.S. and Boston context is noteworthy. As a carrier of culture, Fanmi Nou is concerned with promoting children's selves and wellbeing, and may promote Haitian culture in the process.

The Haitian Flag

Throughout my time volunteering and collecting data, I observed a very direct, visual representation of staff members' and Fanmi Nou's identification with Haiti: reliance on the colors of the Haitian flag. The organization has used the colors red and blue in much of the material content they produce, such as flyers for events and symposia, in their organizational logo, and the colors used on their website. The current Haitian flag consists of one broad, horizontal, royal blue stripe on top, and one cardinal

red, horizontal stripe on bottom. It also includes Haiti's coat of arms and its motto, "L'Union Fait La Force" (There is Strength in Unity).

One Brooklyn-based online newspaper authority, *The Haitian Times*, posted an article around the time of Haiti's Flag Day, May 18th, that provided a brief history of the creation of the current Haitian flag. According to this article, the French flag (comprising a blue, white, and red stripe) was adapted by removing the middle white stripe to create the Haitian flag. This act was symbolic, because colloquially, the blue, white, and red stripes of the French flag represented the black, white, and "mulatto" people that inhabited it ("The Meaning of the Haitian Flag – The Haitian Times" n.d.). Removing the white stripe removed the flag's representation of white colonists, leaving it representative of Black people and people with mixed ethnic heritages. The flag may function as a physical representation or manifestation of two groups of people with a common goal. The flag may have communicated to the public that those formerly enslaved were rejecting French colonialism and starting a new united force.

The Haitian flag may take on new significance in contemporary culture. Fanmi Nou's heavy reliance on representing the flag in a variety of ways—from the flyers it produces to the ways representatives of the organization dress in the colors red and blue at important events—is symbolic. For an organization whose designated role is to provide resources and to advocate for Haitian immigrants, I believe this reliance on the flag is purposeful and strategic. It may be a way to tie Haitians living in Boston not only to one another, but also to Haiti.

The Haitian flag is but one element I have explored in this chapter that helps make up children's bicultural self-fashioning. Children are agents in their own development and incorporate messages from outside events and environments into their conceptualizations of self. Other forms of symbolic and material culture, like music, pictures, and food allow for parent, staff member, and institutional-level promotion of a Haitian identity in children at Fanmi Nou's after-school program. These outward expressions of an affiliation with Haiti represent an embodied response to overt hostility. Parents, staff members, other children, and Fanmi Nou as an institution nurture Haitian identity formation, particularly considering the assaults to identity Haitians have endured. Returning to Csordas (2015) and various body-world relations, when learning to identify with Haiti, children at Fanmi Nou position their bodies in relation to a potentially hostile U.S. environment, embodying Haiti through cultural resources such as food, music, and language, while living in the United States. Relationships between children and these various actors encourage children's bicultural identity development, even in an era of overt immigrant hostility. Within these relationships, parents, staff members, and children identify deficiencies, or gaps, that they then work to bridge.

CHAPTER SIX: Bridging the Gap

To effectively support the healthy development of self (in both children and families), Fanmi Nou partakes in the process of what several of my interlocutors have called and what I am choosing to call, "bridging the gap." As a nonprofit organization for immigrants, Fanmi Nou must contend with inadequate resources. The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated an environment of already scarce resources. The organization helps bridge the proverbial gap by helping families navigate migration in a low resource environment, and by providing academic support to the children in their after-school program. Bridging the gap became a code phrase for identifying deficiencies, figuring out how to bridge them, and sharing that knowledge. Again invoking Bourdieu's (1986) theory of capital, I argue that the bridging work in which staff members, parents, and children engage, represents the creation of capital. Information and knowledge are primary instruments Fanmi Nou relies on to bridge this gap and can be viewed as forms of cultural capital. The organization provides information about immigration policies, the history of Haiti and Haitian migration to the U.S., and academic and practical knowledge to its children and families. Both staff members of Fanmi Nou and families that use its services seem to value this information, and regard it as a powerful tool.

In this chapter, I argue that Fanmi Nou operates in a system of low resources, but uses the power of information to assist their families. Using this information, Fanmi Nou, its staff members, parents, and children all engage in different processes of bridging the gap between various actors. Another force that helps bridge the gap is a shared sense of

community among staff members, parents, and children at the organization. Within and outside of Fanmi Nou, community operates at several levels, often simultaneously. Community may represent a form of social capital. Those I interviewed commonly used the phrases "bridging the gap" and "community." This shared terminology becomes a sort of coverall, and although there is nuance embedded in these terms (they may actually mean a lot of different things for different people), by sharing a word, actors at Fanmi Nou can feel as though they are engaged with the same project. Common vocabulary may be indicative of internalizing a shared mission.

Addressing Low Resources

In interviews, both staff members at Fanmi Nou and family members that are a part of its programming spoke of inadequate resources. Several staff member interlocutors described most families they assist as "low-income," and saw their own role as providing additional support. Relying mostly on private foundations, staff members also expressed this theme of low resources by discussing the inadequate monetary environment in which nonprofit organizations typically function. Nadia noted:

> Resources is something that is a challenge as well because sometimes we might be short staffed. You know, we're not a very huge organization. And so we serve a lot of families, a lot of kids...In the after-school program, we would have like 20, 30 kids come in, you know, to get homework help and we would have, like, oh, we only have three teachers and five volunteers here today, and like, oh, can I get help? Can I get help? Just like, wait, wait, wait, wait. We are so short staffed just patience, patience. We'll continue right? So um yeah so I guess that is, in a sense, our resources can be limited sometimes. For a nonprofit yeah (07/03/2020).

Nadia started out at Fanmi Nou as a tutor and mentor for students in the after-school program, but eventually shifted roles to become the administrative coordinator. She experienced, firsthand, having only three teachers to supervise and assist 20 to 30 students, and was familiar with pleading to students for patience. After the transition to a more administrative role, Nadia still saw this need at the ground level, but was in a better position to address issues like an inadequate number of teachers and volunteers, to ensure the program was running smoothly.

Staff members spoke of parents' busy schedules in terms of low resources. They explained how parents needing to work a lot is why the program is so vital. When circumstances require parents to work multiple jobs to provide for their family, they may have less time to dedicate to their children's academic and extracurricular lives. Dayana, a staff member that has worked with Fanmi Nou for three years and tutors older, high school-aged students, viewed her role at Fanmi Nou as one that delivers the extra support parents may need:

> It [Fanmi Nou's programming] lightens the load and gives resources to parents who may not know how to navigate the school system or find ways to help their kids. And I don't know if you're asking about the other services, but um it just in general, helps immigrant families get on their feet in a new environment which can be like really challenging and daunting. If you don't know where to start (07/06/2020).

Though these staff members discussed the low resource nature of Fanmi Nou operating as a nonprofit and the typical family the organization serves, the COVID-19 pandemic made the issue of low resources more salient. As Ernst verbalized:

> We find-, I myself find I'm living in a very needy community because we have so many people who don't know exactly what tomorrow is bringing. And they don't

> know exactly how to bring food and what they are going to give their kids to eat tomorrow. They don't know-, well BPS [Boston Public Schools] has stated that they give computers and they give internet access. How many people don't have internet access? I think the presence of Fanmi Nou just sheds the light of equity that exists in communities. And I can see the poverty layers, and that I feel that Dr. Marie-Jeanne and other people in leadership find ways to respond to that need. So the dynamics of nonprofit organizations, grassroot organizations with the community is just really intertwined (07/08/2020).

Here, Ernst also briefly refers to the dynamics between nonprofit organizations and the community: their intertwined nature. When a community that already could use additional support faces something like the COVID-19 pandemic, nonprofit organizations and leaders recognize this need, and respond to it. As I discuss in an earlier chapter, the pandemic brought to light (to some) the stark inequities that already existed between different groups of people and communities. A nonprofit organization functioning with low resources, especially amidst a pandemic, is not a unique phenomenon. To combat these circumstances, Fanmi Nou relied on its pragmatic nature by framing information as power.

Information is Power

As I am standing in the hallway waiting for a student to finish using the bathroom so I can escort them back upstairs to their classroom, I notice a quote written on a whiteboard in the hallway of the middle school that Fanmi Nou uses to hold its after-school program. The quote, by Malcolm X, reads: "Without education, you are not going anywhere in this world." - Excerpt from 02/26/2020 Fieldnotes

Throughout interviews and observations at Fanmi Nou, parents, staff members, and children regard information and knowledge as a power to wield. This information can be in the form of academic knowledge, an understanding of Haitian and Haitian

Bostonian history, and current information about immigration policies and how they affect families in the United States. Respondents at Fanmi Nou stress the importance of information, which enables individuals and families to navigate, flexibly, U.S. systems. Like facilitating choice, providing people at Fanmi Nou with information and knowledge may increase their sense of agency, and thus positively impact their wellbeing and health.

The information and knowledge communicated to families and children at Fanmi Nou may exist as a form of cultural capital. As Bourdieu's (1986) theory asserts, capital is not transient or fleeting, but can be accumulated, and it takes time to amass. Capital has "a potential capacity to produce profits and to reproduce itself in identical or expanded form" (15). Cultural capital goes beyond characterizing the economic equivalents of certain resources, and as Bourdieu (1986) discusses, helps explain differential academic achievement between children from different class backgrounds.

Bourdieu (1986) distinguishes between three forms of cultural capital: in the embodied state, in the objectified state, and in the institutionalized state. The embodied state of cultural capital refers to one's dispositions, of both body and mind, whereas the objectified state refers to cultural goods, like books, pictures, instruments, etc. The information provided to children and families at Fanmi Nou often takes the form of embodied cultural capital. The information people learn—and regard as powerful—is manifested in their attitudes and behaviors. The institutionalized state of cultural capital encompasses capital "academically sanctioned by legally guaranteed qualifications, formally independent of the person of their bearer" (20). Institutional recognition of cultural capital helps save a person from having to continuously "prove" their acquisition

of this capital. By receiving academic support at Fanmi Nou's after-school program, they may be closer to achieving cultural capital in its institutionalized form, as when they graduate high school.

A major component of Bourdieu's theory of cultural capital concerns how it is transmitted. It may be transmitted in an implicit way, such as through the socialization of children by family members, or in a direct, more visible way, such as the holding of an informational meeting. Bourdieu (1986) argues that the former type of transmission holds greater weight in its ability to be reproduced, because the latter "tend[s] to be more strongly censored and controlled" (19). The more overt form of transmission of cultural capital characterizes the Fanmi Nou-hosted community forum I attended in December.

At the forum, I learned about issues affecting immigrants in Boston. The conversation with representatives from the legal sector focused on policies such as the Public Charge Rule and Temporary Protected Status (TPS) that were affecting Haitian Bostonians, but before getting into this a pastor led the attendees in prayer. Towards the end of the prayer, the pastor used the phrase "information is power" as a partial explanatory statement for why we were all there, and why forums like these were important. After attending this forum and hearing the pastor's words, I noticed the theme of "information is power" nearly everywhere in my interactions at Fanmi Nou. This phrase rang true throughout the remainder of the December community forum, as community members sought to learn all they could about the immigration policies affecting their families, but it also persisted in the course of my fieldwork. The virtual symposium I attended in May 2020 is another example of how people regard information

as power. Representatives of specific sectors (i.e. law, education, health, media) distributed information in order to provide community members with increased knowledge regarding matters that directly affect them. One legal representative at the event sought to dispel misinformation about the Public Charge Rule:

> Unemployment is not one of these [reasons one may be considered a public charge]. Neither are private benefits, nor benefits for children. Benefits for children are not a problem regarding Public Charge. People should be able to get benefits for their U.S. citizen children without a problem. Also, medical treatment for COVID-19 is exempt from Public Charge—it won't be taken into account (Legal representative at 05/02/2020 virtual symposium).

Further, the everyday environment of Fanmi Nou's after-school program fosters this notion of information is power, as a central feature of the program is teaching and learning, for both students and their parents. Kervens spoke about this:

> So I know we have like informational sessions for parents just to kind of, like, get them up to speed on what the city of Boston is doing. A lot of them don't speak English, so we have translators available to kind of make things a little bit more seamless as far as getting information across (07/02/2020).

He highlights the importance of translation services in the information distribution process.

The theme of information is power manifested in one parent named Lovely's explanation of education as a "key." Lovely immigrated from Haiti at age 19 with her siblings. Her mother paved the way for her and her siblings' migration, just as Lovely's uncle paved the way for her mother. As she joined the Zoom meeting, Lovely commented she was stepping outside to get away from all the noise inside her house. The leaves of a tree rustled behind her, replacing the commotion she escaped the house from with some

calm ambient noise. At one point in our interview, Lovely noted, "It's just because-, so I'm trying my best to integrate and my child because in this country as an immigrant, education is your open door to anywhere. So I'm trying to get them to know it, to implant it in their head that education, education, education is the key to a better future in this country," (08/05/2020). Lovely regards education as a door to opportunity in the United States. An unanswered question that emerges here is, is the value Lovely assigned to education in the U.S. different from what she believed in Haiti?

Fanmi Nou demonstrates this valuing of information in their marketing and spreading awareness of community events as well. For example, the organization distributed one virtual flyer via email to families and supporters of Fanmi Nou and posted it on the organization's public website. Titled, "Legal Clinic: On the Ramifications of Public Charge," this flyer[3] publicized that lawyers from several organizations would be in attendance at the event to distribute "correct information" about the ramifications of the Public Charge Rule. Similar to the above comment about which factors are exempt from public charge from a legal representative at the virtual symposium, this statement implies there may be inaccurate or incomplete information circulating in the community about policies concerning immigration. The graphic also urges people to "make the right choice for you and your family," suggesting that community members possess agency, and can use accurate information to make informed decisions that benefit themselves and their families. In this way, Fanmi Nou and other organizations like it may help shape Haitian community members to be informed and engaged citizens.

[3] Virtual flyer located in Appendix A

Architects of the Bridge

Through the embodied and institutionalized cultural capital of information, children, parents, staff members, and Fanmi Nou as an organization, all help to bridge gaps. Bridging the gap operates in a variety of ways, but from what I observed, operates at two levels: between Haitian immigrant families at Fanmi Nou and non-immigrant families in the Boston community, and between Haitian-born and American-born children, particularly children born in the U.S. to Haitian immigrant parents or grandparents. This process academically and socially assists Haitian immigrant children and their families succeed in a new context that may be, at first, unfamiliar to them. For staff members, bridging the gap refers to initiatives that provide information, and financial, academic, and social support. When I asked staff member Kervens if he could tell me about the children he interacts with in the after-school program, he responded:

> So, for the most part they're um Haitian American. Most of them are like first gen[eration] students in the United States, a lot of the parents are immigrants. So kind of working with them, like a lot of parents probably work like multiple jobs. They don't really have time to kind of focus on the education aspect of the kids like on the homework. A lot of the parents also aren't used to like the American system in that sense. So even if they did have the time, they would be completely different than how they were taught kind of growing up, so I think the experience of going to kids kind of helped to kind of bridge that gap (07/02/2020).

Kervens called attention to both a parent's potential lack of time, and unfamiliarity with "the American system" as reasons for Fanmi Nou bridging the gap.

In May 2020, when Fanmi Nou's virtual programming had been up and running for several weeks, I attended a staff meeting via Zoom. During this meeting, the group

tasked one staff member with making follow-up phone calls to parents and households if a child did not show up for their scheduled virtual tutoring session. The staff member who delegated this role noted that there "cannot be any more students falling through the cracks." This comment of not letting students fall behind suggests a bridging the gap mentality.

Though Fanmi Nou staff members are key actors in supporting recently arrived immigrant families, children support their peers as well. I often observed American-born children at the after-school program assist their Haitian-born peers, in both explicit and implicit ways. Kervens observed and talked to me about these child-to-child interactions:

> ...the fact that they're able to build that friendship in Fanmi Nou is something I admire, and that kind of translates into the classroom as well. Because I know like two years ago when I was teaching, I would teach something and some of the students wouldn't get it, and I definitely tried like two or three different ways. And I saw that the kids also took initiative, they kind of started to teach other kids. They're like, "Oh wait, let me try to help out here and there" (07/02/2020).

To bridge the gap, children may take on a cultural and/or linguistic broker role for their Haitian-born peers. Children may also occupy this brokering role for their Haitian immigrant parents. Nadia articulated her observation of parents relying on children for translation services:

> I know, for example, one of our students, he speaks English very fluently and his mom is, I don't know their story completely, so I don't know if he was born in the U.S. and then his mom just you know migrated here before he was born. Whatever the situation is, I know that her English is very limited. But he speaks fluent, fluent English. So he-, she depends on him a lot to kind of translate maybe documents or just to help her understand things. So that's one of the things that I know happens a lot with the students here-, who are born here, and yet they have that challenge of, okay, my parents kind of depend on me because, you know, I was born here, I speak the language. I'm going to need to help out my parents with a lot of things, whether it's translating, maybe there's a parent conference

> and they have to translate for their parents, you know, because I know I've been in that situation. So um translating for the parents whether it's documents or in person things happening (07/03/2020).

Children functioning as cultural and linguistic brokers for both their Haitian immigrant parents and their Haitian-born peers further demonstrates their bicultural identity. These children can move between the spaces of their Haitian roots and their American lives to function in both realms. Multi-service centers such as this one seem to set up spaces for biculturalism.

During our interview, Bernice wished there was a program like Fanmi Nou for Haitian children when she was a young migrant from Haiti, "because I feel like the kids who come from Haiti have a choice now. They have a program that can help them with their English so that when they go to, you know, to the Boston public world, they can-, most likely to survive." Bernice continued:

> The other thing I feel like this program is doing too, is like, there was a separation between the kids from Haiti and then the kids who are born here. I feel like they're just um, how would I put that? It's like the-, I guess you would say like the bridge, whatever that's in between they're just breaking it, so that the two groups can come-, I mean the kids that were born here can also reach out to help the kids who are-, who come from Haiti. It's not like they come from a different planet. So I think-, which is very important that the program is doing (08/13/2020).

Bernice conveys the same type of sentiment about American-born and Haitian-born children extending across the divide that is an early childhood in different countries. Children are building solidarity, an aspect of identity. Though it sounds like the children are the ones reaching out to help other children, she notes it is the after-school program that is behind this bridging, perhaps because it gives the opportunity for children to reach

out to their Haitian-born peers. Fanmi Nou may inscribe positive relationships between American-born and Haitian-born children into their programming.

Kids are Kids

A theme of bridging the gap also appeared in how staff members spoke to children at Fanmi Nou, and in how staff members spoke to me about children at the program. They emphasized the point that although Haitian immigrant populations face unique and substantial challenges in the U.S., ultimately, children at Fanmi Nou are much like both their peers in the program, and other children more generally. As Ernst put it, "I think one thing at the beginning [of their time at the after-school program], we let our kids know that all kids are the same," (07/08/20). Staff members attempted to lessen the perceived distance between both children within the program (American-born and Haitian-born) and between children in and outside of the program.

Dayana, the tutor and mentor for the older students at Fanmi Nou, talked about both the distinctive difficulties children in immigrant families face, and that they are just like other students. When I asked Dayana what she thought was unique about working with the population of students at Fanmi Nou, she noted that there are special challenges that immigrants face. When pressed further about these challenges, however, Dayana responded she could not think of any challenges that would be unique to immigrant children. She discussed that students at Fanmi Nou are pretty much just like any other student, and they interact with one another like any other child would.

Though initially seeming inconsistent or contradictory, Dayana may have been simultaneously affirming that immigrants, of course, face challenges that non-immigrants do not have to face, while underscoring the fact that immigrant students and their families are not so different from non-immigrant students and their families. In my attempts to elucidate the uniqueness of serving Haitian immigrant families at Fanmi Nou, I may have unintentionally come across as "othering" these children and their families in the eyes of my interlocutors.

Opportunity

In a different, but related way to how I have used the phrase "bridging the gap," parents bridge the gap between their own experiences of migration and their children's present experiences being a child in the United States. Lovely, a quick to laugh woman with a Haitian accent, recounted discussions with her children to help them realize the opportunities afforded to them by her own struggle as an immigrant, and how differently they have things growing up in the U.S. versus in Haiti:

> I um, have them sit down and I talked to them about how hard it is for someone who does not speak English to come in this country. And then when they come, how they have to suffer, especially at the beginning, prior to them learn the language, you know, for them to integrate themselves into the society. I let them know it is not easy. So for them to have that opportunity. You know, right now mom is working, dad is working things seems to be very easy for them. But it wasn't easy for my parents, and it wasn't easy for me to start it for them. So that way they can appreciate what they have. And they can also appreciate life a little bit better (08/05/2020).

Lovely immigrated to the U.S. when she was 19 years old. She discussed a pattern of family members that have migrated to the U.S. applying for other family back in the U.S. to migrate themselves, noting that her mother moved, then applied for her and her siblings. Before that, Lovely's brother applied for Lovely herself. Beginning at an early age, she worked various jobs to help support her family. In this excerpt, she talked about how those who immigrate without knowing English "have to suffer." What does it mean to *have to* suffer? Could this sentiment be related to the expectation of suffering for certain experiences? Lovely's comment connects to Arthur and Joan Kleinman's (1996) discussion of the social nature of suffering. Kleinman and Kleinman describe two aspects of suffering that undergird its sociality, one being that "collective modes of experience shape individual perceptions and expressions," (2). Patterns, and thus expectations, for "going through" or encountering certain hardships (e.g. immigration, discrimination) emerge. According to Kleinman and Kleinman, these patterns are taught and learned both directly and indirectly. Without discounting the very real experience of hardship, perhaps Lovely was taught suffering is part of the experience of immigrating to the U.S. and not knowing English.

In her response to how she talks to her children about immigration, Lovely is comparing her own experience as a young person in Haiti and in the U.S. to her children's current experiences. This form of bridging the gap is more preventative and illustrative than the other examples of bridging I discussed earlier. A major part of Lovely's argument here concerns the concept of opportunity. Her children possess an opportunity that she, herself, did not have growing up. Her parents' and her own efforts

helped create this opportunity for her children. Lovely was able, however, to gain opportunity when she immigrated to the United States:

> Right now I'm in school, getting my NP [educational requirements to be a nurse practitioner]. So if I was in Haiti, I don't-, there's no way I would have been able to get that opportunity. So I am so glad for this country and I want my kids to use that opportunity to do the same way to go high on the education (08/05/2020).

In tandem with her positive feelings about the opportunity the U.S. presents her children is a sadness for the people who may never have this chance:

> And I am happy, in a way, that I came here I have the opportunity to move on. But at the same time I also feel sad too because I know there's a lot of other people who'd love to have that same opportunity. And young-, a lot of young kids especially back home, who have done you know everything they can and then you see their life is just like basically destroyed because they don't have any way of overcoming whatever's going on right now. You know, in Haiti and really, we're not really have like anyone in the government to help out, which you know what I mean. So it's kind of hard. I mean I'm happy, in a way, I'm here. I'm trying to make a better life for myself, but at the same time, I feel sad for those ones that are in Haiti that I see basically wherever they are right now, that's where their life may end because there's no opening door for them, you know, the way things are going (08/05/2020).

Lovely identifies the government in Haiti as a source that prevents people from having opportunity, or at least an entity that does not help. Along with this feeling of a sense of opportunity being present post-migration, is a sense of community amongst those immigrants in the United States.

Community

One of the most prevalent themes unearthed through interviews and observation is that of a shared sense of community for members of Fanmi Nou. Community matters for

health. Like a strong ethnic identification, community may buffer against the negative health impacts of discrimination. As Michalski et al. (2020) argues, community and social connectedness are continuously being flagged as important social determinants of health, even across different life stages.

Returning to Bourdieu's theory of capital, I propose that community is a form of social capital. Theories of capital, however, differentiate between many different types of social capital. One major distinction is between *bonding* and *bridging* social capital. In bonding social capital, people who share social identities trust and cooperate with one another in a social exchange, whereas bridging social capital "comprises relations of respect and mutuality between people who are not alike" (Poortinga 2012, 287). As a third category, *linking* social capital operates vertically, and describes how different communities are connected to both institutions and political structures (Poortinga 2012). Linking social capital may be helpful to describe the networks of relationships Fanmi Nou has established with partner organizations, political leaders, and other key stakeholders in the Boston community and beyond.

Fitting nicely with the extended bridging the gap metaphor I have been using, community (in addition to information and knowledge) at Fanmi Nou manifests as bonding, bridging, and linking social capital. Like bridging the gap, the word community appeared as a broad term to capture a variety of experiences and sentiments. Though I can identify many examples of interviewee's conceptualizations of community and what I would consider examples of community, it is a difficult concept to define.

JoAnn D'Alisera's (2004) book, *An Imagined Geography: Sierra Leonean Muslims in America*, is helpful for framing the concept. D'Alisera cautions against a view of community comprising homogenous members and instead seeks to understand how Sierra Leoneans negotiate their identities and their community identity in a space outside of Sierra Leone. The author dispels the notions of distinct communities, but highlights the interconnectedness of histories and geographies in contemporary life. In D'Alisera's words, "actual geography becomes the site of an ongoing process in which the crafting of boundaries, in this case, Africa/West Africa/Sierra Leone, points to how self-representation is connected to a series of complex negotiations that bridge past and present experience" (38). Though these Sierra Leoneans are living in a diaspora outside of their home country, they invoke Sierra Leone through processes such as memory. When Bernice showed her children pictures of Haiti and had relatives come visit, she may have been seeing herself as part of history. Also recall staff member Lucson and his conversation with a student who asked him which part of Haiti he is from. This, too, may be an example of Haitians living in a diaspora in Boston invoking memories of Haiti to negotiate their individual and communal identities. The social capital that exists between Lucson (a Haitian young adult) and the student (a Haitian child) could be bonding in form, in that the two are connecting over a shared identity and knowledge of Haiti as a geographical space, but also bridging, because they differ in age. This interaction attests to the overlap between the different types of social capital. Though often used generically, the following interview excerpts with staff members help illustrate the nuance in what the term community means to people at Fanmi Nou.

Community to Describe Close Relationships

Nadia regarded community as a value that the organization can introduce to children. When I asked her what she thought Fanmi Nou adds to the lives of the children it serves, she responded:

> Definitely, it adds a sense of community. Because, again, we don't know every-, all of their situations. What they have at home, but Fanmi Nou, you know, there's a whole staff. We always refer to everyone like we are family, we're the Fanmi Nou family[4]. So we-, you know we interact with the parents and the children as if they are our neighbors, our family. Always like saying, oh, how is so and so. And, you know, so it's like a camaraderie. So um like, I love that at Fanmi Nou. I think that's one of the reasons why I've worked with Fanmi Nou for so long. It's like that sense of, oh, we're so like just the family feeling, you know, we even have a theme song that says, Fanmi Nou family. I-, I'm not going to sing it [laughing] (07/03/2020).

Even if staff members are not fully aware of each child's individual situation or story, they strive to make Fanmi Nou a safe and secure space. Here, Nadia uses the words community, family, and neighbors nearly interchangeably to describe the close relationships between Fanmi Nou staff members, parents, and children in the program. Nadia also brings attention to the length of time she has been a part of Fanmi Nou (five to six years), attributing her willingness to stay on as a staff member to the sense of community and family she associates with the organization.

[4] Fanmi Nou in Haitian Creole is "Our Family." The pseudonym makes this sentence redundantly read "we're the Our Family family"

Community as Belonging

Another way of conceptualizing community is to think of it as a shared reason for belonging. Several staff members talked about community as an indicator of belonging to a larger Haitian identity, a clear example of bonding social capital. Ernst discussed that although people may have migrated to the U.S. for different reasons, they still make up the same community:

> So this in a way for the help of Fanmi Nou we create a foundation, where we tell kids, oh definitely, the only thing, that we are not that far apart. For example, I come here, well, even when my parents probably had something in Haiti, but when I come here we are in the same circle, because we all come to the U.S. for something. For you, it might be economic, but for me, it might be education. For another person it might be social justice, for another it might be politics, but when we come we think that our framework where we get a different segmented group, we call ourselves a community. So in our community, every single student's supposed to be here (07/08/2020).

Individuals' circumstances in Haiti might have been different, but migrating to the U.S. for some reason or another allows them to access community. Another important piece of Ernst's response is that children at the after-school program receive the message that they are "supposed" to be there. I observed many instances where staff members and other children at the program welcomed students with lit up faces, excited questions, and hugs. The space was created for them, and adults at Fanmi Nou facilitate a sense of community among them.

One cannot assume a sense of community or family with any group of people that interact, however. As Bourdieu (1986) emphasizes, "the existence of a network of connections is not a natural given, or even a social given," but rather "it is the product of an endless effort at institution, of which institution rites…mark the essential moments

and which is necessary in order to produce and reproduce lasting, useful relationships that can secure material or symbolic profits" (22). For Fanmi Nou, this community arises from people's ability to relate to one another. Kervens discussed how familiarity with someone's history helps develop community:

> And so, like, in that sense, and also, like, kind of like finding like people that also like relate to them. So it's like the communities, everybody's like relatable. Everybody knows it's always kind of like struggles and knows some of the background. And it's not like something like foreign (07/02/2020).

One staff member, Jenny, stressed the community aspect of Fanmi Nou, particularly for the children in its after-school program:

> So for Fanmi Nou students, they have that one community that it's like-, it's their own community. So they can come here [to the after-school program], and they'll find children like them, who have similar background with them and it's probably that they all feel like they can fit in absolutely (07/06/2020).

Along with often sharing a similar social background, Jenny mentioned being able to "fit in absolutely." Perhaps children feel as though they "fit in" in a variety of settings, but at Fanmi Nou, this sense of belonging is even more encompassing—it is absolute.

My discussion with Jenny transitioned to how a family's migration history affects their children. She brought up the point that other children may bully a child with a Haitian accent at school. When I asked if she noticed any of that playing out at Fanmi Nou, she responded:

> I don't see it at the after-school program again because they all come from like the same background. Um they speak familiar languages so, they know how to speak other languages and they have-, some of them-, I'm not gonna, I'm not going to say all of them, but some of them, if not most of them, have been in that process where they just came and don't know the language and stuff like that so I haven't seen it [bullying] at Fanmi Nou I think it's because they are all aware of

> it, like their family speaks another language, so they know like they have a feeling or an idea of what it's like (07/06/2020).

Both an awareness and shared experiences, here, seem to be protective against bullying for students.

The following interaction with staff member Carine also conveyed the importance of someone's ability to relate to another person—to more intimately understand their situation—in order to establish community:

> Carly Ritger: What about the students that have maybe parents or grandparents that are immigrants? Do you see-, do they ever talk about their family migrating even if they didn't themselves?
>
> Carine: Not really. They don't really talk about their family. Um, only one student talk about, um, his mom. He was born into the U.S. So his, his mom just become a citizen and he was really happy about it. [In higher-pitched voice] "My mom is a citizen!" But they don't really talk about their family. I don't want to dig. So I feel like asking questions, but I feel like it's not cool to ask questions about their personal life. Sometimes they're just like, "I'm going somewhere because my mom is a citizen."
>
> Carly Ritger: Mm hmm. Yeah, and it sometimes-, it might be hard to understand certain things or talk about things. I don't know if I would talk about it very much if I was-
>
> Carine: For me, I'll understand because I'm an immigrant, but I um, I know for the students it might be harder for them. Like you said, you don't understand yet, but compared to the one who came here, compared to the immigrants.

As Carine's last comment makes clear, her experiences as an immigrant allow her to more fully comprehend what a parent or grandparent of a child in the program may have felt or experienced as an immigrant. She acknowledges it might be more difficult for students to understand and talk about their parents' experiences if they, themselves, did not migrate from Haiti, and reiterates that it would also be difficult for me. Here,

American-born children of Haitian immigrants may not fully be allowed entrance (or not the same type of entrance) to the Haitian immigrant community, based on a lack of direct experience as an immigrant.

Community and Strategic Identity

This interaction brings up questions of citizenship and identity, not dissimilar from my own discussions about TPS and uncertainty, and identity formation. There are connections between D'Alisera's (2004) work with Sierra Leoneans in D.C. (that I used to introduce this section and help define community) and my work with Haitians in Boston. For example, D'Alisera writes about one informant, Khadi, who raises her children as Sierra Leonean while in D.C., and all the identity negotiations that go along with that process. Khadi notes she does not want her children identifying as American or identifying their parents as American.

At Fanmi Nou, I observed similar (and also very different) negotiations taking place with parents and children. For example, in one of my interviews an interlocutor told me a story in which it excited a child when their immigrant caregiver became an American citizen. When relaying this story, the staff member said the child offered experiences the child-parent duo could partake in, now that the parent was a citizen.

It is important to note here, that being an "American" versus being a "citizen" may mean distinct things. I see being a citizen as having fulfilled certain legal requirements and being granted access to certain services, whereas being an American, to me, sounds much more tied in to matters of identity, culture, and belonging or not

belonging. So, although I first thought this staff member's account of a child's excitement at their parent becoming a citizen ran counter to D'Alisera's (2004) account of Khadi's worry about her children viewing themselves or their parents as American, I now understand that the two sentiments could coexist. A parent could simultaneously be excited about gaining citizenship status and harbor negative feelings about being seen as an American. In addition to strategically engaging with systems, Haitian immigrants and their children may strategically deploy their identities. In this story that distinguishes between being American versus being a citizen, the mother claimed citizenship status for practical reasons, such as legal rights, without lessening her Haitian identity, nor necessarily even affirming an American identity.

Nested Community

As I allude, even within the Fanmi Nou community, there may be separate spheres of community, based upon factors like shared experiences. Nadia shared an anecdote that depicts different levels of community emerging amongst those people who have, themselves, migrated from Haiti and who are fluent in Haitian Creole:

> Um, oh, something unique. I would say the jokes that oh, how do I even communicate this? So the majority of our population, the people we serve are Haitian. And so with that, you know, they'll like interact sometimes and speak Haitian Creole. And of course, I speak it, I-, it's not my native-, my first language was French, and Haitian Creole I understand it. My parents have spoken it to me my whole life. So I understand it, and I can speak it if I have to. But when I hear them speak, you know, and they have like these-, they wholeheartedly, say jokes and they laugh and I'm just like, I wish I could completely understand these because-, I don't know, something about Haitian jokes and how they speak. It's like, I want to be a part of that. But I can't completely. I don't completely understand what they're saying. So something unique about that is just the fact

> that they have a different language, they can communicate in, you know, and it's cool, it's cool, you know (07/03/2020).

Though Nadia expressed a yearning to understand Haitian jokes, her tone was not one of feeling excluded. Rather, Nadia appeared to speak with a sense of awe, or reverence, about the people and their inside jokes she was not fully "in on." She understood how important language (and language fluency) were to a shared sense of community. At Fanmi Nou, there may exist communities within communities.

Although I have described several components and conceptualizations of community in an attempt to nuance the otherwise broad term, it is clear they overlap and are not all that distinct. Both community and information, and the different types of Bourdieu's capital they represent, are tools that allow members at Fanmi Nou to bridge gaps. Bridging the gap assumes a deficiency, or something missing, and while that may be the case, the social and cultural capital Fanmi Nou engenders also provides children with a significant advantage: a strong sense of community and identification with Haiti.

CHAPTER SEVEN: Conclusion

Two students and I sit down at a table that has an assortment of colored pencils lying out. One student looks around for a piece of paper, and when he cannot see one within reach, looks expectantly at me and then at the small notebook that I carry around to take field notes in. I nod and tear out three sheets of blank paper from my notebook, placing one in front of myself, the second in front of one student, and the last in the other student's already outstretched hand. We both know this routine. The student who knew we would inevitably use my field notebook paper for coloring paper asks if he can draw me. Of course, I reply, pretending to pose for a portrait. Though several full boxes of colored pencils with a range of different shades surpassing the average seven colors of the rainbow are strewn over the table, the student appears to have some difficulty choosing which pencil with which to draw me. The student initially picks up a brown colored pencil, chuckles to himself, and instead chooses orange. He looks at me, squints, puts down the orange pencil and tries yellow, then pink. Still not appearing content, the student settles on tracing my outline with a pink colored pencil, but leaves the substance of my person blank. — Excerpt from 10/18/2019 Fieldnotes

When unsure of which color to use, the student chose the default color of the paper on which he drew me, which happened to be white. To come to this decision, he went through and rejected several colors that he could not quite match to the color of my skin. Though he did not appear fully content with the colored pencil options he was given, the student also did not seem upset to just draw my outline. This visual manifestation of the student's thought process gives us insight into his perceptions of me, as somewhat of an outsider. When drawing someone he did not quite know how to represent, the student left me blank; an incomplete outline of a person, unsure of where I fit. In his own case, literally and metaphorically, he colors in the substance of his person. This same student lays confident claim to a Haitian identity, but also represents himself with a bicultural identity, as Haitian American. He boasts his ability to speak some Haitian Creole and outwardly associates certain foods and music with being Haitian, even while he attends an American school and relates to all of his American classmates.

Child Promotion of a Haitian Identity

In Chapter Five, "Identity Formation," I discussed how various actors help promote a Haitian identity in children at Fanmi Nou's after-school program. Besides staff members, parents, and institutions, children help foster a Haitian identity in both one another, and in themselves. Children are agents in their own identity formation. One way I observed this child to child encouragement of a Haitian identity is through language. Several staff member interviewees noted they occasionally hear children speaking Creole with each other. Students I worked with frequently asked, "Do you know Creole?" They often met my typical response, "No, I don't, but I wish I did. I should learn," with a proud, "I can speak Creole *and* English," and sometimes a list of other languages such as French and Spanish. When speaking Haitian Creole to one another in front of me—a white, non-Creole speaking volunteer—the students appeared pleased to engage in an activity where they, instead of their teachers, tutors, and volunteers, were the experts. This sense of pride and expertise relating to an identification with Haiti extends past knowing Haitian Creole, as exemplified in a section of my fieldnotes.

> *Two students and I are sitting at a table preparing to begin our structured homework time. Three pieces of the students' candy (Starbursts of varying colors) were displayed on the table as they deliberated who would claim which piece.*
>
> Student 1: "We got it [the Starbursts] at a party."
> Student 2: "They played Haitian music. You [Carly] wouldn't know."
> Student 1: "Yeah you [Carly] wouldn't know cause you're not Haitian." (Excerpt from November 26th, 2019 Fieldnotes)

Like the instances where students spoke Haitian Creole to each other, the students from this fieldnotes excerpt claimed a specifically Haitian identity with pride; one with

which I could not identify. The candy became more than just candy; it was a signifier of an event that celebrated the children's heritage and, rightfully so, excluded me. It became the locus of staking a claim to a Haitian identity. As in the colored pencil anecdote above, the students in this interaction lay confident claim to a Haitian identity, while being uncertain about where to place the white woman with whom they interacted. Though these cases exemplify a proud assertion of a Haitian identity, students at Fanmi Nou are operating in a U.S.-based system, which connects to my argument about children's bicultural identity formation. The association between Haiti and the U.S. for immigrant families at Fanmi Nou—the transnationality of families and the bicultural identity formation of children—is not new. The implementation and continuation of these behaviors and values in an era categorized by such blatant anti-immigrant, anti-Black, and anti-Haitian hostility, however, is.

A Reimagined Project

The focus of this qualitative ethnographic research study was to investigate the perceptions of children, parents, and staff members at a multi-service nonprofit for Haitian immigrants in Boston. From its inception, I hoped to highlight the youth viewpoint, and to center the experiences of children in my research. I sought to learn about the lived experiences of children of immigrants related to parental immigration, and how these experiences informed the interactions children in Fanmi Nou's after-school program had with other children and staff members. I have provided just a fragment of Haiti's complex history and have shown how the U.S.'s intervention has

often subjected the country to more violence. This historical background provides the necessary context for understanding how a Haitian immigrant multi-service center, Fanmi Nou, functions in the U.S. context.

The theoretical framework, critical medical anthropology (CMA), has prompted me to investigate how a range of forces at different levels (e.g. macro-political economy, the national level, individual interactions) affect health. For example, I have considered the role of historical global relations between Haiti, France, and the United States in the lives of Haitians in Boston today. I have also analyzed the impact of federal level immigration policies on individual lived experience. Through other theories, such as an individualization of responsibility for health, viewing particular spaces as detrimental to health, and certain labeling processes, I have discussed how those with the most marginalized identities are often burdened with the responsibility for good health, and blamed for poor health.

This study has transformed from one designed for in-person, face-to-face participant observation, interaction, and qualitative interviews, to one I conducted primarily virtually. Though the COVID-19 pandemic presented some logistical challenges to interviewing young students, I had the privilege of learning from these students in person for six months, and through Zoom for several months after that. These interactions and observations allowed me to observe children's bicultural identity formation at a unique moment in time. They also allowed me to broaden my exploration and realize how Fanmi Nou engages with the Boston-level educational and federal-level political systems in concurrent system-maintaining and system-challenging ways.

Within these U.S. systems, Fanmi Nou wields information as a powerful tool, to help its families stay up to speed on unstable immigration policies, and to help its adult and child students achieve a level of educational rigor. I suggest that an additional tool or resource that Fanmi Nou, "Our Family," has at its disposal, is that of a shared sense of community for its members. Students, parents, and staff members describe the collection of people at the organization as their family, and this level of community helps children and adults know they are not alone in the often unwelcoming new environment for immigrants that is the United States. A shared sense of community encourages children to claim a Haitian or Haitian American identity for themselves. Parents, staff members, and other children are all key actors in promoting this identification with Haiti for the children in its after-school program.

The COVID-19 pandemic helped elucidate many of the stark inequities that exist in the U.S. and elsewhere. Because I argue that Fanmi Nou selectively engages with systems in the U.S.—such as the educational and legal—it becomes central to my argument to emphasize that the pandemic compelled the organization to engage with drastically altered systems. For many members of Fanmi Nou, it exacerbated aspects of what was already a treacherous system for immigrants to take part in.

Is this Uniquely Haitian?

The strategies I have discussed of those at Fanmi Nou for buffering the negative health effects of discrimination are likely common to a number of other immigrant communities. For example, parents teaching their children about the country from which

they immigrated, or adults learning about changing immigration policies may be common in immigrant families and at nonprofit organizations for immigrants. Many of these observations could be made for any organization serving immigrants and refugees. However, there are aspects of Fanmi Nou facilitating choice, promoting an ethnic identity, and bridging gaps that are, indeed, particularly Haitian.

As I have reiterated, there exists a unique relationship between Haiti and the United States. This history, in itself, renders many of the strategies in which actors at Fanmi Nou engage unique. To help explain this, I will turn, briefly, to the transmission and preservation of Haitian Creole (Kreyòl) in light of language politics. As Haitian linguist Michel DeGraff (n.d.) writes, though Haitian Creole is the national language of Haiti, with many people monolingual in it, French is the pervasive language for official documents, ranging from educational to political materials. Monolingual Haitian Creole speakers have been excluded from social, cultural, and political power in Haiti due to this official reliance on French. "Such French-only policies, at least at the level of the written record, effectively create a situation of 'linguistic apartheid' in the world's most populous Creole-speaking country" (101). Though in recent decades there have been attempts to re-valorize it, as French in Haiti is a language born out of colonization, Haitian Creole has been historically stigmatized and marginalized.

Remember staff member, Nadia, and her story about knowing Haitian Creole, but not to the extent of the native Creole-speaking joke tellers? This meaningful moment gets at the particularity of the preservation of Haitian Creole, when it has historically been a language under assault. Children speaking with one another in Haitian Creole at Fanmi

Nou's after-school program is another place where I see this preservation. Here, having an organization that views Haitian Creole as a source of not only identity, but pride, is a very particular choice. Perhaps this is an intentional choice by Fanmi Nou to celebrate the language that Haiti's long-excluded majority speaks—the language that all Haitians speak, but that is the principal language of poor people. It may be a choice for the organization to align themselves with the poor and working-class people in both Haiti and the U.S. that speak primarily Haitian Creole. In an environment dominated by English, the active preservation of Haitian Creole suggests a deeper allegiance to Haiti.

Directions for Future Study

A large portion of my argument rests on children's bicultural identity formation. I discuss how children are deeply connected to both Haitian and U.S. culture. However, among my participants at Fanmi Nou, the "American" part of identity was less explicitly communicated to me. Though I received some messages about what my interlocutors seemed to think it meant to be American, such as when Bernice talked about not being very "Americanized" because she did not often let her children go to parties, I did not explore what this necessarily suggests about the types of things one should and should not do. Perhaps this lack of an in-depth discussion about what it means to be American, along with the more robust discussion about what it means to be Haitian, suggests that affirming an American side of identity may not actually be all that important, or helpful, to my interlocuters. Regardless, this elaboration on what it means to be American when claiming a bicultural identity could be a direction for future study.

In this thesis, I drew heavily on the work of Erica James, in particular her 2004 and 2010 works, "The Political Economy of 'Trauma' in Haiti in the Democratic Era of Insecurity" and *Democratic Insecurities: Violence, Trauma, and Intervention in Haiti*, respectively. James observes that many people from Haiti grew up in an aid economy, or a republic of NGOs (non-governmental organizations) and had to learn to present themselves as legitimate aid-seekers. I begin this discussion of self presentation for aid and certain forms of capital, but I did not explicitly ask participants that migrated from Haiti how this phenomenon might have shaped their experience both in Haiti and since they have been in the United States. Elucidating the perceptions of Haitians who grew up in an aid economy and seeing how this history impacts their interactions with systems of aid in the U.S. could be another potential direction for future study.

Upholding Pragmatism

In Chapter Four, I discuss Fanmi Nou's action-oriented nature, and I feel that to do this quality of the organization justice, I must offer some pragmatic takeaways from my research study. I suggest that key decision makers and stakeholders in the multiple systems that Fanmi Nou interacts with (e.g. the Boston public school system, the federal level immigration policy system) recognize that although the organization successfully operates under the current design of the systems, it does not mean that these systems are, themselves, successful in accommodating to Haitian immigrant populations. In order to accomplish their mission and assist immigrant families in the community, Fanmi Nou must concede to (i.e. maintain) certain aspects of the systems with which they engage.

The organization is not, however, contradictory when they simultaneously advocate for change (i.e. challenge).

In the years preceding and the years during this ethnographic fieldwork project, Haitian immigrant families were up against not only the existing, pervasive hostility they had faced historically, but also a renewed, more overt hostility. As hostility and discrimination escalated, the adaptive response by immigrant families and advocates had to expand and intensify as well. Perhaps this is where such a strong promotion of a Haitian identity comes from. The nature, form, and degree of resistance is tied to the nature, form, and degree of oppression.[5]

I propose that ethnic identification as Haitian or Haitian American, and membership in the Haitian community, may act as a buffer for the effects of discrimination against that very same Haitian identity and affiliation. Children and the adults in their lives enact agency in aligning with a marginalized identity in the U.S., particularly at this moment in time. We could regard this cultivation of a sense of pride in a Haitian identity as a health asset. It is how communities and families support the health of their children.

[5] In conversation with thesis advisor, Linda Barnes

APPENDIX A: Public Charge Virtual Flyer

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